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## ART. I. — *Popular Poetry of the Teutonic Nations.*

1. *Volkslieder der Deutschen.* Eine vollständige Sammlung u. s. w. durch Fr. Karl, Freiherrn von Erlach Mannheim, Hoff, 1834.
2. *Holländische Volkslieder.* Gesammelt und erläutert von Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann, Breslau, 1833.
3. *Danske Viser fra Middelalderen* etc. collected by Nie-rup, Rahbeck, and Abrahamson, 3 Vols. Copenh. 1813.
4. *Svenske Folkvisor*, by Geijer and Afzelius, 5 vols. Stockh. 1814 — 1816.

WE have often been struck with the truth of Herder's remark, that the line of characteristic distinction is drawn far more sharply between the popular poetry of the different nations, than between their printed literatures. Learned writers borrow from, or imitate each other ; while the analogies in the popular productions are only to be ascribed to agreement in a common nature. It is chiefly in respect to these characteristic differences, that these latter ought to be of the deepest interest to the philosopher and the historian. The different languages of the different nations are the store-houses of their respective thoughts and sensations. The treasures, accumulated there in the course of centuries, enriched by each thinking and

imaginative mind, but also often falsified by foreign influence and deficiency in discernment, are coined in the most national, in the most idiomatic form, in traditional tales and popular poetry. There is indeed a symbolic language common to the human race ; but only in its principal outlines ; all the finer shades are the result of the climate or of historical influences. We do not wish however to be thought to overrate the poetry of the people in respect to its absolute beauty. William Grimm, speaking of the ancient Danish popular ballads, calls the poetry of nature "a mighty stream, which advances, dashing and foaming with its own living pulses, and slowly rolls on to traverse the whole land ;" while he compares the poetry of art to "the ornamental aqueduct, which forces the waters of the living stream through narrow pipes, and causes them to rise in jets or fall in artificial cascades." But *natural* and *popular* poetry are two distinct things often confounded. Genuine art never injured natural talent. Men do not, like nightingales, bring song with them into the world, but only the capacity for song. The mind of the popular poet is in general the most cultivated in his circle. He thinks as much of the *effect* of his song, as the learned poet does ; and his effusions are beautiful, not *because* he is an uneducated man, but *in spite* of his being so.

In comparing the nations of Europe to those of the other continents, there is nothing which can give us a stronger proof of the superiority of the former, than their respective popular poetry. We were prepared to find the latter infinitely below us in civilization and intellect ; but the wild flowers we are looking for, do not require a cultivated soil ; and from the very bosom of a rough and stony earth, the miner fetches precious gems. In respect to the Oriental races, it may justly be said, that their best mental productions are deposited in their written literature ; and that the small information we have as to the East, must necessarily prevent our discovering hidden treasures. But the literature of a nation is after all only the product of the faculties of a few individuals ; and as to the latter objection, we doubt, whether Hindoostan is not better known to our scholars than Servia. We do not hesitate to maintain, that a single village of this latter province harbors more real poetry than all the Indo-Chinese countries together ; and one valley of South Western Germany, more than the whole Celestial Empire. The very rudest beginnings of the European

nations exhibit at least some features of energy and ardor ; while a feebleness and tameness prevails in most of the productions of the Eastern semi-barbarians to such a degree, that we are inclined to assent to the opinion of a sagacious English writer, who "sometimes thought that the extreme monotony and uniformity of season, production, and scenery in the East, might contribute to deaden and tranquillize the faculties, removing from the mind the powerful incentive of variety to animate and rouse it to action."\*

There are certainly among the Oriental nations some, which, as a whole, bear decidedly the stamp of poetical nations, e. g. the Afghauns, whom Mountstuart Elphinstone thinks the only Eastern people who know the feeling of love, in the Christian-European sense of this word ; and also the Arabs, even independently of their former wide and well known influence. Indeed the whole life of the Bedouins is interwoven with a kind of wild poetry ; and other nomadic nations of Asia have more or less of the same stamp. But compare their poetical productions, the creations of their fancy, with those of the European races, Teutonic or Slavic, and you will be struck with the difference. We are however far from denying the influence which the East has exercised on our poetry, as well as on other tendencies of our mental developement. And how *could* we deny what history herself has written with distinctly legible characters, when she informs us that all the great families of nations, which now form the population of Europe, issued from the inexhaustible sources of Asia ? Education begins in the cradle ; and even education cannot entirely extirpate natural propensities and faculties. To this was added the general influence of the Crusades, direct and indirect. There are numerous tales still living among all the European races, evidently drawn from the great fountain of the East. But, if we except those nations which are by their local situation connected with oriental ones, as are most of the Slavic and the Hungarian tribes,—only the body of those tales is the same ; another spirit breathes in them.

On the other hand we recognise, notwithstanding our remarks about their characteristic distinctions, a certain family resemblance in the popular poetry not only of such of the European nations as belong to one and the same stock, but among them all ; the stamp impressed by a common religion, and by

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\* Crawford's History of the Indian Archipelago.

the feudal system more or less prevalent among them all. There are not a few striking points of coincidence in the popular productions of all European nations. Numberless variations on a very few themes, are common to the South and to the North. And indeed, what we call poetical invention, what is it, but variety in the mode of combination? "The colors," as an able German writer remarks,\* "nay even the forms in poetry, as in the kaleidoscope, already exist; accident here, and genius there, put them in new positions and thus create new pictures." But the affinity of the subjects is not the only striking resemblance. We shall show in the sequel, how often poets belonging to nations differently situated, and in cases where it is beyond question that they could not have imitated or influenced each other, have drawn precisely the same features.

In all traditionary poetry, you meet with frequent repetitions of certain stereotype phrases and terms. The same actions are almost without variation expressed in the same form of words. Our readers well know, how much also the king of popular singers, Homer, shares in this peculiarity. Besides the frequent recurrence of whole stanzas, there are also stereotype epithets, common to all popular poetry. In the Eastern-Slavic poetry, all subjects worthy of praise, are *white*, all fountains *cool*; the cuckoo is *grey*, the sabre is *sharp*, the sea is *blue*, etc. There are other similar epithets peculiar to each of the Slavic nations separately. In the ancient English ballads also, similar constantly recurring expressions are found: *my (his) own true love*, applied indiscriminately to faithful and faithless lovers, just as in the Servian song, the swarthy Arab's hand is *white*; *robes of green*, *my merry men all*, and many others. In the Scandinavian popular ballads all cloaks are *blue* or *grey*, all damsels *proud*, or when mentioned by their christian names *little*, as *little Kirstin*, *Sidselelle*, etc. the harp is *golden*, the noble steed *grey*. German popular poetry has fewer epithets; but it abounds in repetitions of certain phrases and expressions. The simplest actions or occurrences are introduced by an interrogation:

"What draws he from his pocket?  
A knife, so pointed and sharp, etc.

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\* Wilibald Alexis, on "Balladen Poesie," *Hermes*, No. XXI.

What found she standing in the road ?  
A hazel, that was green," etc.\*

Spanish and Italian popular poetry, since these languages, from their more poetical nature, are instruments more easily managed, partake least of this peculiarity ; their poets take however the more liberty in borrowing thoughts and ideas from each other.

Another point of coincidence more or less common to all the different races, is the *burden* or refrain ; and in this they agree with most savage nations. This feature indeed has a deeper foundation in human nature than is discernible to a superficial observer. Alexander Humboldt, in speaking of the pottery of the Maypures, an American tribe, who painted with great skill *grecques*, i. e. certain figures of animals, meandrites, following one another in rhythmic order, observes : "The eye finds in this order, in the regular periodical return of the same forms, what the ear distinguishes in the cadenced succession of sounds and concords. Can we then admit a doubt that the perception of rhythm manifests itself in man at the first dawn of civilization, and in the rudest essays of poetry and song ?"† The same remark might be applied to the *burden* of popular songs. Emanating from a natural human want, it is, as we observed above, known to all the nations in the world ; and its general use is its best justification. But what is with the Indian a mere animal ejaculation, an unmeaning *heh*, or *hih*, compared by Washington Irving to the sound of the hiccup, is with the northern ballad-singers often a picturesque idea, and always a musical phrase.

All nations employ riddles as a test of sagacity ; and this custom European nations brought from the East. In most of the modern languages we find popular ballads containing a gradation of questions, to the answer of which high importance

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\* How ancient this peculiarity is in German poetry, is manifest from its appearing repeatedly in the oldest specimen of verse the Germans possess, viz. in the lay of Hildebrand.

Was begegnet Dir auf der Heide ?  
Ein stolzer Degen jung, etc.

What meets thee in the moor ?  
A knight so proud and young, etc.

Was führt er auf dem Helme ?  
Von Gold ein Kreuzelein,  
Was führt er auf der Seite ?  
Den liebsten Vater sein.

What bears he on his helm ?  
A little cross of gold ;  
What leads he at his side ?  
His own dear father old.

† Remarks on the ancient Inhabitants of America.

is often attached. In several old English ballads the lover's choice depends on the answers to the following questions :

“ O what is longer than the long way ?  
Or what is deeper than the deep sea ?  
Or what is louder than the loud horn ?  
Or what is sharper than the sharp thorn ?  
Or what is greener than the green grass ?  
Or what is worse than a woman was ? ”

And he is satisfied with the answer :

“ O love is longer than the long way !  
And hell is deeper than the deep sea !  
And thunder is louder than the loud horn,  
And hunger is sharper than the sharp thorn !  
And poison is greener than the green grass,  
And the devil is worse than a woman was ! ”

In a Servian ballad a girl sits on the banks of the sea, inquiring :

“ What's broader than the mighty sea ?  
And what is longer than the field ?  
And what is swifter than the steed ?  
What sweeter than the honey dew ?  
What dearer than a brother is ? ”

A fish rises from the water, and gives her the following answer :

“ O maid, thou art a foolish girl !  
The heaven is broader than the sea ;  
The sea is longer than the field ;  
The eye is swifter than the steed ;  
Sugar more sweet than honey dew ;  
Dearer than brother is thy love. ”

Of a very similar description are the riddles of the Danish hero Vonved ; and it is quite in the character of northern heroism, that all persons not able to solve them, were punished with death. The same riddles exist in Swedish, as a separate ballad.

We could adduce many other instances of a similar surprising coincidence. Besides love and the admiration of heroic

deeds, the feeling most strongly manifested in popular poetry, is the belief in an Omnipotent Providence and its retributive justice. This belief appears most prominent in German popular poetry. A multitude of examples occur at once to the writer, and probably to every reader familiar with German literature. In a well known Low-German nursery tale, "*Van den Machandelboom*," the concealed murder of the little boy, committed by his step-mother, comes so tragically to light, that no ancient tragic poet could have found in the atrocious deeds and final punishment of the Atridæ, a subject better rounded off, or answering better to the prescriptions of Aristotle. There is also a horrible ballad, where "three knaves," as they are called, come to an inn, and, after having peaceably taken lodgings, steal at night every thing they can find; and not being able to agree who shall have the beautiful daughter of the hostess, they cut her in three pieces, in order to divide her among themselves. It ends with the following verses :

" And where there fell a drop of blood,  
A year an angel singing stood;  
And where the murderer put his sword,  
A year a raven sat and croak'd."

A beautiful Servian tale, called the *Sisters-in-Law*, offers a most striking instance of coincidence in the popular representations between two nations entirely different in situation and character, and where even the suspicion that one was borrowed from the other cannot occur. A young woman, jealous of the love her husband has for his unmarried sister, after having calumniated her in various ways, kills her own child and accuses poor Jelitza of this atrocious crime. Jelitza is punished in the manner she herself dictates, in case she should be found guilty. She is bound to the tails of wild horses, and her limbs are scattered through the fields :

" But where'er a drop of blood fell from her,  
There a flower sprung up, a fragrant floweret;  
Where her body fell when dead and mangled,  
There a church arose from out the desert."\*

The sister-in-law is soon after seized with a dreadful disease, which lasts "nine anniversaries;" she is brought to Jelitza's

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\* Bowring's Translation.



church, to be there absolved and saved ; but a voice from the church forbids her to come in ; in utter despair she submits herself to the same punishment the innocent sister has suffered :

“ But where’er a drop of blood fell from her,  
There sprung up the rankest thorns and nettles.  
Where her body fell when dead, the waters  
Rushed and form’d a lake both still and stagnant.”\*

In accordance with this popular feeling, their ballads seldom, if ever, end with a moral dissonance, or want of poetic justice. Their lyric songs indeed do often ; for they are the expressions of momentary feeling, and, as such, the mirrors of an individual state of mind. Spanish and Servian ballads do, likewise, sometimes thus terminate ; for they lay, in general, no claim to *completeness* ; they are, the former only historical, the latter only plastic representations of certain isolated situations ; they seldom profess to relate the whole story, as do the ballads of the Teutonic nations, especially the English and Scotch. In these latter we see frequently not only divine justice, but even worldly retribution, taking place. Lamkin and his accomplice, the treacherous “nourrice,” in the Scotch ballad, are deservedly executed ; in the German ballad, the angels sing about Annie’s grave, and the ravens croak around the wheel where her murderer is exposed. In another ballad of this nation, we even see an angel descending from Heaven to order the body of the innocently murdered youth to be buried. The same feeling is also manifested in the prevalence of the popular belief, that trees or flowers, planted on graves, are animated by the souls of the dead buried therein. And here we meet with a striking point of coincidence even in an Afghaun tale. Every reader knows the conclusion of Fair Margaret and Sweet William :

“ Margaret was buried in the low chancèl,  
And William in the higher ;  
Out of her breast there sprung a rose,  
And out of his a briar.

“ They grew as high as the church top,  
Till they could grow no higher ;  
And there they grew in a true lover’s knot,  
Made all the folks admire.”

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\* Bowring’s Translation.

The same conclusion with some slight variation, is common to "Lord Thomas and Fair Anet," to "the Douglas Tragedy," and to nine or ten other English and Scotch ballads. The same idea is introduced in a more simple and natural way in a Servian ballad. The lovers are buried side by side, their hands are clasped through the intervening earth; and the pine and the rose tree, planted on their graves, interweave their branches. The conclusion of a popular Afghaun love tale, Adam and Doorkanee, exhibits the same thought with still more strength. The Afghaun lovers are buried far from each other; but their bodies are found to have met in one grave, and the two trees which spring from their remains mingle their boughs over it.

Our limits do not permit us to expand these observations in their full extent. We must be satisfied for the present to direct the attention of our readers to the affinity of the Scandinavian and German popular poetry with each other; without undertaking a comparative view of the English and Scotch, so nearly related to it; or the poetical productions of the Celtic race, which would be found necessary to the full understanding of the former.

To avoid misapprehension, we will state here in few words, what we wish to have understood as the proper subject of our inquiries on Popular Poetry.

We do not mean *national* poetry. The whole poetical literature of a people is, of course, national in a wide sense of the word. In a narrow sense, we consider those productions chiefly as national poetry, which have developed themselves principally out of the qualities and condition of the nations themselves, to which the poets respectively belong; and have grown up in their own bosom without predominant foreign influence. The royal Psalmist, Shakspeare, Calderon and Goethe, are true national poets. In no other land but their own could the divine seed have shot up into such plants. No nation but their own could have produced them *just as they are*.

Again, we do not understand by popular poetry all the poetry which is read and sung by the common people, nor even all that portion of it which has exercised a decided influence upon them. Else we should have to name the Bible first; since its poetical sentences and psalms are read and remembered by the common people of protestant countries more than

any other kind of poetry. Then, too, we must adduce many spiritual hymns, and also many secular songs, mostly of a social character, the productions of popular writers of the higher classes, but sung by all classes of the people ; but still given to them, not produced by them. We should have also to include the many Italian, and especially German opera songs, which, indeed, owe their popularity chiefly to their tunes, but which have now spread over all the world, civilized and uncivilized ; and in the cities of Italy and Germany have superseded the old popular ballads and songs. There is hardly an individual in Germany, who does not know by heart the Hunter's Chorus, from Weber's *Freyschütz* ; and we learned as a fact, a year or two after the appearance of this opera, that the negro slaves of the West Indies were accustomed to sing the wedding song, and to draw up vessels to the shore after the tact of "Schöner, grüner Jungfernkranz." Although all such songs must be called *popular* in a different sense of the word, they must be excluded from the present examination.

But we have done with describing what we do *not* wish to have understood as being our present subject. By *Popular Poetry*, whether it bear the form of songs, ballads, dramas, or any other, we mean only those productions, existing now or formerly, which *proceed from* the common people, and *operate on* the common people ; the blossoms of popular life, born and nurtured under the care of the people, cherished by their joys, and watered by their tears ; and as such eminently characteristic of the *great mass* of the nation and its condition. Although no one can expect to find in them a full portrait of a people, yet they never fail to present some of the most striking features.

And it is in this respect that we have especially the nations in view as they are at present ; considering the past only in its reference to the present time. Let us see how much of the poetical feeling is left, which, with its creative power, once pervaded all the nations of Europe. Let us not search the libraries which contain the treasures of their literature ; let us observe the people themselves in their domestic relations. Let us see what blossoms the trees bear, with which the poor man surrounds his hut ; with what fragrant, soul-refreshing flowers the grain is interspersed, which secures to him his physical sustenance. Let us listen to the low voices of nature which so unconsciously utter the sweetest, nay, often the most solemn accents. This very *unconsciousness* is often one of the most characteristic features of popular poetry, and one of its greatest

charms. The Servians, when asked by their more refined friends at Vienna to recite before company some of their beautiful popular epics, were ashamed and almost hurt; and so strong was the suspicion, that they were thus entreated merely to cast ridicule on them, that they could be induced only with difficulty to comply with the request.

The close family connexion between the different branches of the Teutonic stock, is very strongly manifested in their common traditions, and in their respective poetry; although each of them is distinguished by national features of its own. A long chain of fictions once wound itself through the ancient northern world, whose now broken links lie scattered over those regions; but the thinking inquirer may easily recognise that they were once connected, and may often discover where they formerly were joined. Of the original poetry of the various Teutonic races, which, five or six centuries after the Christian era, inundated all Europe, we know little more, than that they were still the same people, who, as Tacitus tells us, although fond of poetry and song, used even their voices as instruments to frighten their enemies; and whose songs Julian the Apostate compares to the wild cries of the birds. Meanwhile poetry unfolded itself in all its glory among their brethren, the Scandinavian races. We scarcely see, in the third century after Christ, Odin and his Goths appear in the North, when the Skalds emerge from the night of the past; skilful, elaborate, initiated bards, of whom we know not from what Asiatic fountain they drew their wisdom and skill. But the poetry of the Skalds, although of a purely national character, and apparently born and nursed in the bosom of their own race, can strictly, nevertheless, not be considered as *popular poetry*, according to the definition we have given above. The earliest effusions of the Skalds or northern singers, were doubtless of this character; and several epic songs of the Edda bear, in their perfect simplicity, distinctly the stamp of genuine popular poetry, e. g. the ancient Quern Song, *Grotta Saungr*, printed with a literal translation in Mr. Jamieson's *Northern Antiquities*. The authors of these songs are unknown, as is the case with nearly all popular poetry. The antithesis between the poetry of nature and the poetry of art, in the case of the ancient northern songs, has been denied by an eminent Danish scholar.\* He

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\* E. P. Müller.

attempts to maintain that among the ancient Scandinavians each person was a Skald, that is, a poet, according to his talent, artificial or simple, just as his genius inspired him. But it is difficult to disprove what history has made evident in various ways, and what is still more clearly proved by the nature of the thing itself. The Skalds, who united in themselves the functions of the historiographer and of the poet, formed a distinct and highly honored class. They were the interpreters of the gods, the ambassadors of kings; not the organs of the people. Skaldic poetry was a regular art and science. How difficult it was merely to understand many of their verses; with what a high degree of skill the Skalds knew how to entangle their words and thoughts, so that they became entirely unintelligible to the uninitiated,—as Mallet supposes, with the express purpose to make their art appear more venerable to the common people,\*—the reader, who has not studied the matter, can hardly form any idea. Perhaps we cannot introduce our subject better, than by giving here a single specimen of Skaldic art. No stronger contrast, indeed, could be offered to the plainness and rude simplicity of the real popular ballads, of which we are hereafter to speak. “Popular poetry,” observes the distinguished German Scholar, W. Grimm, in comparing the rude ancient Danish ballads with the more elaborate songs of the Skalds, “popular poetry lives still in the state of innocence; she is naked, without ornament, bearing in herself the image of God. Art has arrived at consciousness; she has no longer the courage to represent things as they are; she must dress them up.”†

The following curious stanzas have been preserved by Stephan Stephanus in the notes to his edition of Saxo Grammaticus.

1. “Haki Kraki hoddum broddum  
Saerdi naerdi seggi leggi  
Veiter neiter vella pella  
Bali stali beittist heittist.
2. Haki Kraki hamde framde  
Geirum eirum gotna flotna  
Hreiter neiter hodda brodda  
Brendist endist bale stale.”

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\* Introduction à l'Histoire de Danemarck.

† Preface to his translation of “Altdänische Heldenlieder.”

To give a sense and meaning to these verses, they must be arranged as follows; the words in the two lines of each couplet being taken alternately, in a regular, though intricate and varying order:

1. "Haki broddum saerdi leggi,  
Kraki hoddum naerdi seggi,  
Veiter pella bali heittist,  
Neiter vella stali beittist.
2. Haki hamde geirum gotna,  
Kraki framde eirum flotna,  
Neiter brodda endist stale  
Hreiter hodda brendist bale."

The reader may observe that in both these ways of reading, the arrangement of the second verse is very different from that of the first. The sense of the song is no less artificial than the form; it is a succession of antitheses: 1. "Hakon has wounded the limbs with points (of weapons), Krake has delighted the men with money; the giver of the silk dresses has been devoured by the flames; the gold-enjoying king has been wounded with the steel." 2. "Hakon has tamed the men with spears; Krake enriched the mariners with gold; the carrier of the pointed steel perished by the steel; the scatterer of gold by fire."

The Scandinavian poets possessed no less than one hundred and thirty-six different forms of verse for their songs; most of them equally artificial. We need however hardly mention, that the really high value of the Scandinavian poetry is entirely independent of the strange *ars poetica* contained in the *Skalda*\*. Its fables and legends are spread over all the Teutonic north; nay, its flowers have unfolded themselves in various forms, and through different centuries, in all the regions where the Northmen carried their victorious arms. There is also no doubt that previously and cotemporary with the artificial songs of the initiated bards, popular songs existed in the Scandinavian language, which were partly devoted to the same subjects. Some are preserved in the Edda†; some, although in an altered form, in the ancient Swedish and Danish ballads of which we shall speak in the sequel. They passed into these two languages gradually as these latter formed

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\* The *Skalda* is the third part of the second Edda, which contains in alphabetic order, the poetical phrases of the former volumes.

† See p. 275.

themselves from their mother tongue ; while with the grandeur and the glory of the Icelanders, the only nation who remained in the possession of the original idiom, they gradually perished in their original shape. In Iceland, no trace is any longer to be found of them, with the exception of the portion contained in the ancient written *Sagas*.

How much these venerable relics of antiquity are respected and loved by the present Icelandic peasantry, is generally known. Their usual evening reading during the long nights of their almost everlasting winters, consists of some old Saga, or such other histories as are to be obtained on their island. Dr. Henderson in his valuable work on Iceland, (page 357,) gives a most delightful description of such an Icelandic winter-evening, when the great lamp is lighted, and all the family assemble to sit down to some useful work ; and the head of the family, or another intelligent member, advances to the seat near the lamp, and commences the reading, which is frequently interrupted by remarks and explanations for the benefit of the children and servants. " In some houses," this writer adds, " the Sagas are repeated by such as have got them by heart ; and instances are not uncommon of itinerating historians, who gain a livelihood during the winter by staying at different farms till they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge. — The custom just described appears to have existed among the Scandinavians from time immemorial. The person chosen as reciter was called *Thulr*, and was always celebrated for his knowledge of past events, and the dignity and pathos with which he related them." The joyful and generous interest which even the poorest of the poor inhabitants of Iceland have manifested in the undertaking of the Society at Copenhagen, which is about to publish their national relics, proves better than any thing which can be said, that the present population of that island is no degenerate race.

The connexion between the Teutonic nations is strikingly proved by their common superstitions ; and the same tie unites them intimately with the remnants of the Celtic race. And here we must remark, that the frequent appearances of supernatural beings, and their lively interest in human affairs, is one of the principal marks of distinction between the popular poetry of the Celtic and Teutonic nations on the one side, and the Slavic and South-western nations on the other. Not that spirits are excluded

from the latter ; but the relation to the other world is more seldom brought into view, and is *almost* exclusively confined to nursery tales. Throughout all Great Britain and its neighboring islands, throughout all the three Scandinavian empires, and throughout all Germany, the belief in a class of spirits of a diminutive size and forming a race by themselves, has been from ancient times disseminated among the people, and still partially exists. These spirits were in English usually called Elf, plural Elves, later Fairies ; in the ancient northern language *álfr*, plur. *álfar* ; in old German *Elbe*, in modern German *Elfe* ; in Swedish *elf*, plur. *elfar*, *elfvor* ; in Danish *elv*, plur. *elve* ; in Gaelic and Irish *Doane-shi* and *Shéfro*, i. e. the good, the peaceful people. These all have their origin in the earliest times of paganism. The first teachers of Christianity did not succeed in eradicating the belief in them ; but by representing them as the offspring of hell and instruments of the fiend, they impressed a character of gloom upon this superstition, which originally it had not. The mysterious and contradictory qualities of the elves may in this way be accounted for. The Edda indeed distinguishes already two kinds of elves, elves of light and elves of darkness ; but only in respect to the different regions of these spirits ; one class dwelling in the light of heaven, the other in the caves of the dark earth. In the Christian view the elves became fallen angels, precipitated from heaven because they suffered themselves to be seduced by the devil ; but not fallen deep enough to reach hell, and spellbound to the earth and the other elements. Thence their twofold and contradictory relation to man ; now, in remembrance of their original light, beneficent and kind ; then, influenced by their seducer, malignant and destroying. Thence also their anxiety and fear in respect to their own futurity, and their uncertainty about their lot at the last day. Hence their endeavor to substitute beings of their own race for children ; in order thus by a mental and physical admixture with the *redeemed* race, to regain a *soul*. Hence the sensitiveness, which drives them to rage when they see themselves considered by men as the offspring of hell ; and their gratitude when permitted to join in the prayers of men ; although they have seldom the courage to do so, or if they do, are accustomed to omit passages, or to murmur some words indistinctly, and to shew themselves especially timid before clergymen and near churches. All the elementary spirits of the northern



nations, water-nymphs, mountain-spirits, or those of the domestic range, participate in the same character, modified according to their situation, and especially according to the fancy of the narrator. Few of them appear as decidedly good or bad ; they are good to those they love, and bad to those they hate ; but always intrusive and intermeddling, mischievous and peevish.

This world of spirits never has been a regular system. It never has been more than the fanciful creation of a wild popular imagination, without internal connexion and consistency, and full of contradictions in itself, and still more with an enlightened religion. But who can deny that the belief in a multiplicity of mysterious beings, who surround men, who are endowed with a supernatural though limited power, who suffer and rejoice with men, — who can deny that such a belief gives an enlivening breath to dead reality ? The march of intellect, and above all the diffusion of knowledge, which honorably characterizes the last half century, have nearly overturned the throne of this superstition, and we are far from regretting it. But wherever its ruins are still extant, they serve to give a peculiar poetical charm to the whole region.

But independently of these common superstitions, there is a great number of themes of popular ballads and tales, which several centuries ago were equally familiar to all these nations ; and it is no inconsiderable number which are so even at present. After the final close of the great migrations of the nations, little intercourse took place between them until the Crusades caused a new movement. The influence of the latter, however important it may have been in other respects, can come little under consideration in respect to our present question. It may, therefore, justly be assumed, that those traditions, which we find in the middle ages extended over the whole North, partly originated before the Teutonic stock was ramified into its various branches ; and partly were handed over to the different nations during the great migrations, which shook for whole centuries both Europe and Asia, and were not without influence on the two other portions of the world. To Great Britain they were carried by the Saxons and Danes ; and in Scotland became amalgamated with the traditions of the older possessors of the country, which were probably derived by a previous overflowing from the same great source. In several of the stories preserved in the Icelandic Sagas, the German

origin is evident; the exploits of the heroes common to the Edda, to the *Heimskringla* and to the German *cycilus* of heroic traditions, were sung at the same time by the northern pirates, and by the Teutonic conquerors of Italy. The brother, who in order to find his lost sister, wanders through the world, and descends even into the deep sea, where the sister shelters him from the rage of the sea-monster, is the hero of certain popular ballads and tales, in at least four different languages, and in perhaps ten times as many different provincial dialects. The beautiful ballad, called in German "*Edelkönigskinder*," in Swedish "*Konungabarnen*," is extant in several German and in as many Scandinavian versions. Of the German ballad, "*The Castle in Austria*," there exist an old Danish and a Swedish version, printed as early as 1600. The Scottish "*Frog-lover*" is the "*Froschkönig*" of one of the most ancient German tales. Jack the Giant-killer and Tom Thumb are the heroes of Scandinavian, German and English nurseries. The old Danish ballad, "*Skön Anna*," exists in no less than three varying versions in Scotland, where it is known chiefly by the initial verse, "*Who will bake my bridal bread*," &c. The tradition of the harp made of the bones of a maid secretly murdered and strung with her hair, which sounds of itself and thus discovers the crime, exists in Swedish and Scottish ballads, and in one sung on the Feroe Islands, communicated by Rask. The same legend, in its principal features, is also the theme of a German nursery tale. The subject of Bürger's celebrated "*Lenore*," is equally familiar to all the Teutonic nations. The German poet founded his romance on a popular ballad, which he heard accidentally sung in an adjoining room. The Danish "*Aage and Else*," and another ballad in this language, have the same subject; and "*Sweet William's Ghost*," was founded on "*The Suffolk Miracle*, or a relation of a young man, who, a month after his death, appeared to his sweetheart, and carried her on horseback behind him for forty miles, in two hours, and was never seen after but in his grave."\*

It would be easy to point out a great many other cases of remarkable coincidence. Rhymes apparently without meaning, interwoven in the games of the children in England, or fragmentary verses sung in all the nurseries of the United Kingdom, are often found in Germany in a more perfect form,

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\* Monthly Magazine, Sept. 1796.

and become intelligible as parts of some popular ballad. An incoherent German ballad finds its explanation in a Scotch or Gaelic tale ; or a tradition preserved in the Scandinavian North, throws light upon a dark passage of an ancient Scotch ballad.\*

A considerable number of fairy legends and popular tales, collected within the last twenty years by Danish and Swedish scholars, still pass from lip to lip in those countries, and were even till recently principally preserved by oral means. But to ascertain how much the *belief* in them is still alive, would require an examination on the spot, which has never been permitted us. It may be supposed, that while on the flat green islands of enlightened and prosaic Denmark, and in the south of the more populous Scandinavian peninsula, they form mere amusements for long winter evenings, there are regions in the mountainous solitudes of the North, where still reigns the full and unshaken faith, which indeed is alone able to give soul and breath to most of these popular tales. The inhabitants of the lonely Feroe and Shetland islands, are said to live still in constant intercourse with a world of spirits ; and the different superstitions of the Scandinavian and the Gaelic races are wonderfully amalgamated in their traditions.

I. The rich treasure of Old *Danish* popular poetry is probably known to most of our readers only by reputation. The grand, nay, gigantic character of these ballads, must necessarily have rendered the merely heroic portion of them strange to the tame generation of the present age. But we are glad to hear that some of the more domestic, but yet equally romantic class, are still sung by the people ; not in the Danish cities, and even not among the peasantry of Germanized Zealand ; but in the remoter parts of the kingdom, or in the valleys of Norway, where less intercourse with foreign nations has preserved a purer nationality.

And what a powerful and vigorous race must it have been, among whom these heroic ballads could ever be *popular* poetry ! What a race, whose imagination was not overwhelmed by the gigantic, the amazing power of these scenes ! A portion of these ballads had indeed already ceased to live in the memories of the people in 1591, when they were first col-

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\* For other instances of remarkable coincidence, see J. Grimm's Introduction to his Translation of the Fairy Legends of Ireland ; W. Grimm's Preface and Appendix to his Translation of Old Danish Ballads ; Danske Viser ; Svenske Folkvisor ; Jamieson's Northern Antiquities, &c. &c.

lected and printed ; and the learned publisher had even then to consult old manuscripts. Another hundred of them, however, which were added a century later, could even then be written down from the very lips of the people.\* The most modern of these songs, according to the best judges of the language, are not later than the fifteenth century ; the oldest not older than the thirteenth century. This of course can only be applicable to their present form, i. e. the external *form* of these ballads, or the shell. The *soul*, the kernel itself, we mean the subject and its poetical conception, existed undoubtedly much earlier. "The Sun of Homer," observes a distinguished German scholar, in maintaining this opinion, "has scattered his gems also over these icy mountains, over these frosted valleys ! The existence of the Scandinavians was divided between a life, wild, warlike, and full of action, which in early times consisted mostly of piratical adventures, undertaken in order to gain a livelihood, or of excursions against their neighbors, in order to subject them to tributary vassalage ; and days of idleness and perfect rest. To enjoy, during these intervals, the luxuries and easy pleasures of life, was denied them by a rough climate ; during the long and gloomy winter nights they had leisure to give themselves up to meditations on the exploits of their ancestors. Thence their wealth in epic poetry, and in compositions undoubtedly among the most profound and most powerful which ever have been produced by the human mind. They all have something primitive, something rude ; the form is often entirely neglected, harsh and stern ; but they all have the vigor and the strength of youthful life, unrestrained and untamed, that despises all external rules and ornaments." †

And how imposing is this rude and naked nature ! Without introduction, without explanation, the hearer finds himself in the very centre of the action. Depending on the power of his subject, the artless poet often announces the issue in the first lines. The words fall sharp, like the strokes of the sword ; heavy, like the hammer on the anvil ; and each word is a deed.

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\* The "*Danske Kjömpe Viser*," containing one hundred heroic ballads, was published in 1591, by Andrew Wedel Soefffrensen, the friend of Tycho Brahe, and dedicated to Queen Sophia of Denmark. In 1695 the work was republished, and another century of ballads added, by Peter Syv, and likewise presented to Amelia then Queen of Denmark.

† Preface to W. Grimm's "*Altdänische Heldenlieder*." We translate from memory.

Nothing is said but what is most necessary; and even here much is left to the imagination. We see ourselves transported from one realm to another; from the strand of the sea to the summit of the mountain; from the subterranean cave of the witch to the bower of the noble maiden; without even an intimation. No description; no lyric effusion; action stands close to action; and even the final result is omitted, because it follows of course. A misty veil covers the sides of the mountains, and the valleys between, while only the summits are lighted up by the sun; and we are left to trace the landscape by its principal outlines.

The mental features of the heroes also, in their wonderful power, are drawn only by a few bold strokes of the pencil. They are the immediate descendants of the gods of the North; themselves still a giant race, to which the diminutive measure of our own feelings must not be applied. Enormous in mind, in purpose, and in action, we see them performing deeds, which it seems to us only madness could have dictated. Their anger is rage; their love a devouring flame; blood only can quench their thirst for vengeance; and where even their own giant strength does not suffice, the dark powers of a subterranean world are invoked, and are often present with them in unison or in conflict.

Most of these remarks hold good also as to another class of the Danish popular ballads, which the modern collectors have brought together under the title of *Romances and Ballads*.\* Although moving likewise in a region of romance and magic enchantment, they are brought nearer to the human heart by a picture of more human feelings, with an admixture of just as much ancient heroism as we are still able to comprehend and to admire. In general, less sketch-like than the older historical songs, they are distinguished by the same powerful conciseness, far from the minute diffuseness which is so tedious in the great mass of the English ballads. Many of them are of the most exquisite beauty, and belong to the gems of literature. In the tissue of a rude and gloomy period, we see pictures interwoven of the most delicate texture, and gold threads winding themselves even through the coarsest ground. In one of these ballads, founded on a very ancient tradition, familiar to all the Scandinavian North, Hagbar the hero will

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\* See *Danske Viser*, etc.

rather die, than tear in pieces the hair of Signilde, with which treacherous hands have bound him. In another ancient ballad, the power of maternal love breaks even the laws of nature. Nothing can surpass the energetic and tender *naïveté* of the idea, where the mother in her grave hears her children cry from the ill treatment of their step-mother, and by her intreaties induces the Lord to let her go to soothe them :

“ ’Twas long in the night, and the bairnies grat ;  
Their mither she under the mools [mould] heard that.

That heard the wife under the eard that lay :  
Forsooth maun I to my bairnies gae !

That wife can stand up at our Lord’s knee ;  
And : May I gang and my bairnies see ?

She prigged [prayed] sae sair, and she prigged sae lang,  
That he, at the last, gae her leave to gang.”\*

In a Swedish ballad, with the burden : “ At Rimstead Queen Anna lies buried,” which we darkly recollect to have heard in our childhood, a trait of *naïve* moral purity occurs, which we never could forget. Queen Anna on her death-bed makes her confession ; and being inquired of as to her sins, after having examined herself, she answers :

“ Nought have I to confess of wrong,  
Save that once my white silk ruff  
I starched upon a Sunday’s morn.”

The following beautiful ballad may serve as a specimen of the Danish popular poetry. We have chosen it, because it is one of which we positively know, that it is still, or was at least towards the close of the last century, sung by the common people in Jutland and in Faroë, in two or three slightly varying versions. It exists also in Swedish with some alterations.†

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\* From Jamieson’s Translation ; printed in the Notes to the Lady of the Lake, at least in the early editions.

† In respect to our attempts at translation in this and all the specimens given in this article, we must remark, that the verses of the originals are in general so rough, the measures so irregular, and the rhymes so imperfect, that any approach to elegance would have essentially impaired the *fidelity* of the translation. Indeed, fidelity is the only merit to which we can lay claim.

## LITTLE CHRISTIN'S DEATH, OR THE BODING NIGHTINGALES.\*

"Sir Médel at court of the king served he,  
 He loved the king's daughter, that fair lady.  
 The queen called her daughter, and thus said she :  
 And is it true what they say about thee ?  
 Then shall he hang on a gallows so high  
 And below in a bonfire thou shalt die !  
 And her mantle blue little Christin put on ;  
 To see Sir Médel at night she is gone.  
 Little Christin, with sorrowful heart went she :  
 Rise up, Sir Médel and open to me.  
 To enter here I gave none the right,  
 And none will I let in here at night.  
 Rise up, Sir Médel, and let me in,  
 I've spoken but now with my mother the queen.  
 She saith, thou shalt hang on the gallows so high.  
 And below in a bonfire I shall die.  
 No, neither shall I be hung for thee,  
 Sweet love, nor shalt thou be burnt for me.  
 Now gather the gold in the chest with speed,  
 While I go and saddle my own grey steed.  
 And his blue mantle he's over her thrown,  
 And to his grey steed he's lifted her on.  
 And when from the town they came to the grove,  
 She turns her eyes to the clouds above.  
 Seems then for thee the way too wide ?  
 Or hurts thee the saddle on which thou dost ride ?  
 O no ! the way it seems not too wide,  
 But hurts me the saddle on which I ride.  
 His mantle blue he spreads on the ground ;  
 List here, little Christin, to lay thee down.  
 O Christ, that one of my maids was with me,  
 Before I die, my nurse to be !

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\* We prefer this ballad in the form in which it was first printed in the *Danish Spectator*, 1793 ; and after this in *Graeters' Bragur*, Vol. III. 292. Nor do we see why it should be less genuine merely because the beginning is more decent, or the end more tragic, than in the other versions.

Thy maids they all are far from thee,  
And thou hast no one near but me !

O rather here on the ground I 'll die,  
Than a man a woman's pain shall spy.

A kerchief bind o'er my eyes and head,  
And I 'll be to thee in the nurse's stead.

O Christ, that there was some water near,  
My panting heart therewith to cheer !

Sir Médel he loved her so warm and true,  
He went to fetch water in his silver-bound shoe.

And when through the bushy greenwood he went,  
The way to the well seemed never to end.

And when to the well he came from the grove,  
Two nightingales sung in the boughs above :

Little Christin she lies in the greenwood dead,  
And two dead babes in her lap are laid.

Little he heeds the nightingales' song,  
Back to the grove his way seems so long !

But when he came the thick wood among,  
There it was true what the nightingales sung !

A grave both deep and broad dug he,  
And there together he laid all three.

And when he stood on the grave so deep,  
He thought 'neath his feet his babes did weep.

He leaned his sword against a stone,  
And right through his heart the point is gone.

Little Christin she loved him so true and deep,  
And now with him in the earth doth sleep."

Whether the following fairy ballad can still be called *popular* among any class in Denmark, we are unable to say; although a friend of ours states that he heard it sung by a girl who was not likely to have taken it from the Kjömpe Viser, or the Danske Viser. We give it here as one of the best specimens of the incomparable beauty of these ancient ballads; and at the same time as peculiarly expressive of the magic charm the elves used to exercise.



## ELFHILL-SIDE.

“I laid my head on Elfhill-side,  
My eyes they sunk to sleep;  
There came two maidens tripping along,  
They fain with me would speak.

One patted me on my cheek so white,  
The other she whispered to me :  
Rise up, rise up, thou fair young swain,  
And join our dance and glee !

Wake up, thou fair young swain, wake up,  
And join our dance and glee ;  
My maidens shall sing, if thou wilt hear,  
Their sweetest melody.

The one began a song to sing,  
Of all the fairest one ;  
The striving stream stood still thereby,  
That before so swiftly ran.

The striving stream stood still thereby,  
That before so swiftly ran ;  
The little fishes in the flood  
With their fins to play began.

The fishes in the flood began  
With their fins and tails to play ;  
The small birds in the greenwood all  
They chirped their sweetest lay.

And hear, thou fair young swain, and hear,  
And wilt thou with us dwell,  
Then will we teach thee to read and write,  
And powerful rune and spell.

I'll teach thee how the bear to bind  
And the boar to the oak tree ;  
The dragon that lies on the gold so bright,  
'Fore thee from the land shall flee !

And they danced out and they danced in,  
All elvish in look and mien ;  
There sat the fair young swain all still,  
And on his sword did lean.

And hear thou, hear thou, fair young swain,  
Wilt thou not with us speak,  
Then shall our sword and knife so sharp  
With thy dearest heart-blood reek !

Had God not made it my good luck,  
That the cock then clapp'd his wing,  
I should have staid on Elfhill-side,  
With the Elves in their dwelling.

Herewith I warn the Danish youths all,  
Who to the court do ride,  
That never they ride this way at eve,  
Nor sleep on Elfhill-side."

II. The *Swedish* popular poetry is in body and spirit so very nearly related to the Danish, that we must confess our inability, with our limited knowledge of it, to discover their distinguishing features. More than two thirds of the ballads of these two nations, are possessed by them in common, often with very few deviations ; and to ascertain which is the original, would be impossible. The scenes of several, now known only in Danish, are in Sweden ; still more of the Swedish lay the scene in Denmark. The most ancient of the Swedish popular ballads, those of the heroes of the Nibelungen and their cotemporaries, exist even in this language only in manuscript or in print ; but a great variety of heroic ballads, a little more modern, live still on the lips of the people ; and the publishers of the very rich collection, the title of which stands at the head of this article,\* and which appeared about twenty years ago, were able to draw almost exclusively from living sources. "The peasantry of Sweden," Mr. Jamieson remarks,† "are great singers ; and, if possible, are more attached to old ballads, and the airs to which they are sung, than even the Lowland Scots ; to whom, in their language, habits, characters, and appearance, they bear a most striking resemblance." The ancient ballads still current among the Swedish peasantry, are at least not later than the fourteenth century ; although in subject and essence, some of them are undoubtedly much older. That they cannot be later, one of the editors of the above-mentioned collection, the poet and scholar Geijer, has proved from internal grounds. During the fourteenth century, a state of hostile feeling arose in Sweden between the nobility and people, which has never since disappeared ; but of which there is no trace in these ballads. The people sang in them

\* *Svenske Folkvisor*, etc. This collection is confined to East and West Gothland, Wermland, Upland and Smaaland. Another, made by Arvidson, was announced in 1833.

† *Northern Antiquities*, p. 372.

the adventures and the exploits of the nobles ; whom they did not yet consider as their oppressors, but as the flower and the honor of the nation. There is, moreover, in these songs not a vestige of the national hatred between the Swedes, Danes and Norwegians ; which likewise did not spring up until towards the close of the fourteenth century, coëval with the unhappy union of Calmar. Up to that time, the three nations, although separated and under different governments, evidently considered themselves as one race. After that time, their popular poetry is said to have assumed quite a different character.

The Swedes have been rich in popular productions in every age. The collection in question contains several modern popular ballads of uncommon beauty. In respect to form, the Swedish ballads, although in general very similar to the Danish, have more variety and completeness in their measures. The burden also is frequently full of meaning, and is for the most part preserved, while in many Danish ballads, it seems to be lost ; the reason of which difference may be, that the former are always *sung*, while the latter have long since been more read than sung.

We have already stated, that the Danes and Swedes possess the greatest portion of their popular ballads in common. But it frequently happens, that what is ascribed in Denmark to the Merman, is in Sweden related of a mountain *Troll* ; and the more poetical nature of their country has created among the Swedish people many *local* traditions, attached to hills and mountains, which the Danes do not know. Arndt's interesting journey through Sweden, contains much valuable information on this subject. The magic attraction of the waters, and the mysterious riddles of the mountains and mines, are as powerfully felt by the Scandinavian nations, as by the Germans ; and also, as with these, the mirror of their imagination reflects this feeling in the shape of Water-sprites and Mountain-dwarfs. The German Water-sprites, or *Nixen*, are, for the most part, females ; the Swedish *Necken* belongs often to the male sex. The *Strömkarle* is an old bearded man, who plays the harp to the dances of the Elves. In a Swedish nursery tale, two children play on the bank of a river ; a water-sprite, (Swedish *Necken*, German *Nix*) rises from the water and sings and plays. But the children in sportive mischievousness, cry out : " Why do you play and sing, Sprite ? you cannot be saved after all." The

sprite, hearing this, casts away his harp, cries bitterly, and descends into the deep. The children tell their father at home what has happened. The father then bids them go back, to comfort the sprite, and to tell him that also his Redeemer liveth. The children run to the river, and find the Sprite sitting on the waters, and still weeping. "Be comforted, Sprite," they cry, "Father says that also your Redeemer liveth." The sprite then resumes his harp, and begins to play again most cheerfully; because he now knows that his soul will not perish.\*

The following ballad will enable the reader to compare Danish and Swedish traditions. It is extant in Sweden, in several varying versions, mostly only fragmentary. The bewitching power of the Elves here manifested, is in other ballads ascribed to female water-sprites; and the same adventure which here happens to the young swain at the evening hour, happens to others at day-break, but never later than the dawn.

ROSEGROVE-SIDE.†

"I was a fair young swain one day,  
And had to the court to ride;  
I set me out at the evening hour,  
And listed to sleep on the Rosegrove-side.  
*Burden.* Since I had seen them first!

I laid me under a linden green,  
My eyes they sunk to sleep;  
There came two maidens tripping along,  
They fain with me would speak.  
Since I, etc.

The one she patted me on my cheek,  
The other she whisper'd in my ear:  
Rise up, rise up, thou fair young swain,  
If of love thou list to hear!  
Since I, etc.

And forth they led a maiden fair,  
And hair like gold had she:  
Rise up, rise up, thou fair young swain,  
If thou lovest joy and glee!  
Since I, etc.

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\* Svenske Folkvisor, Vol. III. p. 128.

† The same with the Danish Elf-hill-side, on page 288. The same burden is sung also with the Danish ballad.

The third began a song to sing,  
 With right good-will she begun ;  
 The striving stream stood still thereby,  
 That before was wont to run.  
 Since I, etc.

The striving stream stood still thereby,  
 That before was wont to run ;  
 And all the hinds with hair so brown,  
 Forgot which way to turn.  
 Since I, etc.

I got me up from off the ground,  
 And on my sword did lean ;  
 The maiden Elves danced out and in,  
 All elvish in look in mien.  
 Since I, etc.

Had it not then my good luck been,  
 That the cock had clap'd his wing ;  
 I should have slept in the hill that night,  
 With the Elves in their dwelling.  
 Since I had seen them first."

The traditions respecting Sir Olof's unfortunate meeting with the Elves, the morning before his bridal day, are also current in both countries. They are more perfect in Danish, but more generally diffused and more varied in different versions, in Swedish ; the natural consequence of their being preserved in Sweden down to our own times chiefly in the mouths of the people, or in their older form in manuscripts deposited in the royal libraries, while in Denmark they were centuries ago multiplied in print, and ceased from that time to be exposed to arbitrary or accidental changes. We give here one of these melancholy ballads, as it is still sung in Upland and East Gothland. The collection from which it is taken contains another version, sung in the latter province ; and a third, preserved in the royal library. It is probable that many more exist.

#### SIR OLOF'S BRIDAL.

" Sir Olof rode out at the break of day ;  
 There he came to an Elf-dance gay.  
 The dance it goes well,  
 So well in the grove !

The Elf-father, his white hand outstretch'd he ;  
Come, come, Sir Olof, and dance with me !  
The dance, etc.

Nought can I dance, and nought I may ;  
To-morrow is my bridal day.  
The dance, etc.

The Elf-mother, her white hand outstretch'd she ;  
Come, come, Sir Olof, and dance with me !  
The dance, etc.

Nought can I dance, and nought I may ;  
To-morrow is my bridal day.  
The dance, etc.

The Elf-sister, her white hand outstretch'd she ;  
Come, come, Sir Olof, and dance with me !  
The dance, etc.

Nought can I dance and nought I may  
To-morrow is my bridal day.  
The dance, etc.

And the bride she spoke to her bridemaids so :  
What may it mean that the bells do go ?  
The dance, etc.

It is the custom on this our isle,  
Each young swain ringeth home his bride.  
The dance, etc.

And the truth from thee we no longer conceal ;  
Sir Olof is dead and lies on his bier.  
The dance, etc.

Next morning when uprose the day,  
In Sir Olof's house three corpses lay.  
The dance, etc.

They were Sir Olof and his bride,  
And his mother who of sorrow died !  
The dance it goes well,  
So well in the grove ! ”

The historical fact, on which this tragic tradition is founded, is unknown. But it is not unfrequent that elvish traditions are attached to well known historical persons ; and unfortunate events are ascribed to the influence of subterranean powers. One of the sons of Gustavus I, Duke Magnus, died in mental

derangement. He was said to be *bewitched*, some said by an elf-maid, some by a water-nymph, because he refused her love. Two or three ballads relating to this subject, are still sung in Smaaland and East Gothland. As our readers have seen by the two preceding ballads, how Swedish elves behave, we will now introduce to them a Swedish water-nymph or *Hafstroll*.

## DUKE MAGNUS.

"Duke Magnus look'd out from his castle-window,  
How the stream so rapidly ran ;  
There he saw how there sat on the foaming stream,  
A fair and lovely woman :  
Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
I pray thee now so freely ;  
Say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

And I will give thee a travelling ship,  
The best that knight e'er did guide,  
That sails on the water and sails on the land,  
And through the fields so wide.  
Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
I pray thee now so freely ;  
O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

I have not yet come to quiet and rest,  
How should I betroth me to thee ?  
I serve my king and my country,  
But to woman I've not yet matched me.  
Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
I pray thee now so freely ;  
O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

And I will give thee a steed so grey,  
The best that knight e'er did ride,  
That goes on the water and goes on the land,  
And through the woods so wide.  
Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
I pray thee now so freely ;  
O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

I am a king's son so good,  
How can I let thee win me ?  
Thou dwell'st not on land but on the flood,  
Which would never with me agree !  
Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
I pray thee now so freely ;  
O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

And I will give thee so much gold,  
 As much as can ever be found ;  
 And stones and pearls by the handfull,  
 And all from the sea's deep ground.  
 Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
 I pray thee now so freely ;  
 O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

O fain I would betroth me to thee,  
 Wert thou of Christian kind ;  
 But thou art only a vile sea-sprite,  
 My love thou never canst win.  
 Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
 I pray thee now so freely ;  
 O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !

Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, bethink thee well,  
 Speak not to me so scornfully !  
 For if thou wilt not betroth thee to me  
 Then crazed shalt thou for ever be !  
 Duke Magnus, Duke Magnus, betroth thee to me,  
 I pray thee now so freely ;  
 O say me not nay, but yes, say yes !"

But not always are the dark powers victorious. Christian faith and human skill often overcome their temptations and their influence. They are also very susceptible to the power of music ; and may be bribed by it to give up their prey. The following ballad affords one of the numerous instances of the popular belief in the power of music. Traditions of this description could originate only in the imagination of a highly poetical people. The ballad we here communicate, is still sung in West Gothland and Wermland, to a very pleasing and pensive melody.

#### THE POWER OF THE HARP.

" Little Christin she weeps in her bower all day ;  
 Sir Peter he sports in the yard at play.  
 My heart's own dear !  
 Tell me, why dost thou grieve ?

Is it saddle or steed that grieveth thee ?  
 Or grieveth that thou'rt betroth'd to me ?  
 My heart's, etc.



Not saddle, nor steed is it, that grieveth me ;  
 Nor grieveth that I 'm betroth'd to thee.  
       My heart's, etc.

Far more I grieve for my fair yellow hair,  
 That the deep blue waves shall dye it to-day.  
       My heart's, etc.

Far more I grieve for Ringfalla's waves,  
 Where both my sisters have found their graves !  
       My heart's, etc.

When a child, it was foretold to me,  
 My bridal day should prove heavy to me.  
       My heart's, etc.

I will bid thy horse to have round shoes,  
 He shall not stumble on four gold shoes.  
       My heart's, etc.

Twelve of my courtiers before thee shall ride,  
 And twelve of my courtiers on either side.  
       My heart's, etc.

But when they Ringfalla forest came near,  
 There sported with gilded horns a deer.  
       My heart's, etc.

And the courtiers to hunt the deer are gone ;  
 Little Christin she must go onward alone.  
       My heart's, etc.

And when over Ringfalla bridge she goes,  
 There stumbled her steed on his four gold shoes.  
       My heart's, etc.

On four gold shoes and gold nails all :  
 The maid in the rushing stream did fall.  
       My heart's, etc.

Sir Peter he spoke to his footpage so :  
 Now swiftly for my golden harp go !  
       My heart's, etc.

The first stroke on the gold harp he gave,  
 The foul ugly sprite sat and laugh'd on the wave.  
       My heart's, etc.

Once more the gold harp gave a sound ;  
 The foul ugly sprite sat and wept on the ground.  
       My heart's, etc.

The third stroke on the gold harp rang ;  
Little Christin reach'd out her snow-white arm.  
My heart's, etc.

He play'd the bark from off the high trees,  
He play'd little Christin upon his knees.  
My heart's, etc.

And the sprite himself came out of the flood,  
On each of his arms a maiden proud.  
My heart's own dear !  
Tell me, why dost thou grieve ?

For the sake of variety we conclude our specimens with an ancient ballad of a different character, the composer of which was influenced by Christian feelings ; while the spirit of all the preceding, is the faint and gradually retiring echo of the old Pagan times. The following simple and very ancient tale is extant both in Danish and Swedish ; and indeed is one of the few which is still heard in Denmark. We give it here from the Swedish ; because we like the Swedish copy better, as being more complete, and especially more poetical. As here given, it was taken down in West Gothland ; but it is said to be a favorite piece throughout the whole country, and to be found on every stall.

LITTLE KARIN'S DEATH.

“ The little Karin served,  
Within the young king's hall ;  
She glisten'd like a star,  
Among the maidens all.

She glisten'd like a star,  
Of all the fairest maid ;  
And to the little Karin,  
One day the young king said :

And hear thou little Karin,  
O say wilt thou be mine ?  
Grey steed and golden saddle,  
Shall, if thou wilt, be thine.

Grey steed and golden saddle  
Would not with me agree ;  
Give them to thy young queen,  
And leave my honor to me !

And hear thou little Karin,  
     O say wilt thou be mine ?  
 My brightest golden crown  
     Shall, if thou wilt, be thine

Thy brightest golden crown  
     Would not with me agree ;  
 Give it to thy young queen,  
     And leave my honor to me !

And hear thou little Karin,  
     O say wilt thou be mine ?  
 One half of all my kingdom  
     Shall, if thou wilt, be thine.

One half of all thy kingdom  
     Would not with me agree ;  
 Give it to thy young queen,  
     And leave my honor to me !

And hear thou little Karin,  
     Wilt thou not yield to me,  
 A cask with spikes all studded  
     Shall then thy dwelling be.

If a cask with spikes all studded  
     Shall then my dwelling be,  
 God's holy angels know full well  
     That without guilt I be !

They put the little Karin  
     In the spiked tun within ;  
 And then the king's young servants,  
     They rolled her in a ring.

And from the high high heaven,  
     Two snow-white doves there came ;  
 They took the little Karin,  
     And lo ! they three became.

And from the deep deep hell,  
     Two coal-black ravens came ;  
 They took the wicked king,  
     And lo ! they three became "

We have only to add a few words on the *music* to which the Northern ballads are sung. All popular music is simple. The melodies move with little variation among a few notes ; but the impression of the whole is strong and distinct ; and

only the *whole* is the object. While modern composers of ballad-melodies prefer to set each verse to different notes, according to the different character of the words ; the tune of a popular song, which is not unfrequently repeated twenty or thirty times without alteration, must only be considered as the *beurer* or support of the *whole*. And as such, it is in general expressive to perfection. A considerable number of the ancient Danish melodies have been preserved ; of many other ballads the tunes are lost ; and of some, the melodies are extant, while their words have perished, or have only revived in scattered fragments. Peter Syv, the editor of the largely augmented Kjömpe Viser, says that even the Psalms were sung in the churches to the sweet and pleasing airs of the popular songs. The Swedish melodies above all, of which there exists a great variety, ancient and modern, are in general distinguished by exquisite sweetness. They are all without exception in the minor or flat key ; as are likewise most of the Danish melodies. The above remarks on popular music hold good of them all.

III. *Germany*. It is well known to our readers, that the German imagination has from ancient times peopled with spirits of various descriptions the forests and castles, mountains and rivers. The two latter particularly, with their mysterious caves and their unexplored deeps, have always been the theatre of supernatural influence. Much attention has been recently paid by foreign travellers to those legends and tales ; although these must have lost their principal charm in the lips of a skeptic guide, enlightened by the new-fashioned light of the last century. There is no doubt that these tales and traditions, whether they appear in prose or in verse, are real *Popular Poetry* ; but to treat of them at large would oblige us to go far beyond our limits. A few words may serve as an introduction to our remarks on the popular poetry of Germany.

The Elves or *Elben*, although a race of spirits of genuine German growth, are little known in Germany by the common people of the present generation. In ancient German poetry the dwarf *Elberie* appears frequently ; in the chronicles of the middle ages, and even in the later witch-trials, the name *Elbe* is used as synonymous with *Hexe*, witch. Into modern literature it has been introduced by the poets of the last century, under the somewhat altered name of *Elfe*, from the North, and from England ; and is there at present perfectly natural-

ized\* But the only form under which this appellation still exists among the common people, is that of the *Alp*, where it signifies *Nightmare*; it is the Scandinavian *Mare* or *Marra*, the *Phuka* of the Irish, the *Gwyll* of the Welsh. The place of the Elves is taken in Germany by the dwarfs, the witches, the wights and sprites of various names. The dwarfs are not deformed, half-human creatures; but, like the Elves, are well shaped intelligent beings of a diminutive size, and perform in the German legends precisely the business of the Elves in the Scotch and Irish tales. Where they appear single, and come to the assistance of individuals, they are known under the name of *Graumännchen*, *Bergmännchen*, etc. and then they are mostly in some connexion with the eternal enemy of mankind, and demand a high price for the help they bestow. But often they are introduced as living in large societies in the womb of the mountains, having a king and a queen, and practising all the ceremonies of a court with much of ludicrous dignity and stateliness. They are then of a kind and peaceful nature; and in many cases good Christians may have intercourse with them without endangering their souls. They have plenty of gold and jewels, and sometimes require the assistance of human strength to carry their treasures; or they come to invite some experienced lady to assist their queen in childbirth; and in all these cases they reward those who have helped them most royally. But there are also many instances where the same spirits do mischief. Their favorite business in Ireland is the exchanging of their own offspring for human children, much to the annoyance of the poor mother, who cannot quiet the howling and screaming creature, nor satisfy its voracious appetite; and this is also sometimes practised by them in Germany. In some regions around the Harz mountains an infant is still carefully watched until it is baptized, lest it should be stolen or exchanged. As this superstition prevails almost exclusively among the women, it appears chiefly in nursery-tales. But we remember also a popular ballad, sung in the southern regions of the Oder, where such a *Wechselbalg* or

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\* Grimm's Introduction to his translation of Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of Ireland*, pp. lv — lvii. Grimm is of opinion that the signification of the word *Alp* was originally connected with the Latin word *albus*, white, and with the Greek *ἄλφειον* flour, and *Ἀλφειώ* a female spectre with which nurses terrified children, and which reminds us of the "White Lady" of the Teutonic nations.

changeling is introduced. The ballad begins by placing the hearer immediately in the midst of the scene.

“Nun krähn die Hahnen alle,  
Der Böse muss das Kind lan fallen.”

“Now crow the cocks all,  
The fiend must the babe let fall.”

The intention of the evil spirit to keep in his power the stolen child being thus frustrated, a gentleman finds the boy on the road, calls him Benedict, and lets him grow up as his son. But Benedict has no rest until he has found his own parents, and driven away the changeling. This latter, although the genuine son has grown up meanwhile to the age of a youth, still lies in his cradle, howling with the voice of an old man; and still sucks with insatiable greediness the poor mother's milk. When Benedict enters the parental hut, the Elf, whose business for several lives must have been that of a changeling, flies howling:

“Acht Mütter hab ich zu Tod gezehrt  
Die neunte hast du mir verwehrt.”

“Eight mothers I have suck'd to death;  
The ninth, thou hast made me spare her breath.”

The German water-spirits especially, have an urgent desire to communicate with men, and to blend their race with mankind. The tradition of the Stauffenberger, who married a water-nymph, which is transmitted to the present time from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, is spread in manifold forms all over Germany.\* All Europe knows the popular opera, “The Nymph of the Danube,” founded on this tradition; and the beautiful novel of Baron Fouqué, called “Undine,” which tells the same story as reflected in the pure and imaginative mind of the poet, *ought* at least to be known by all Europe and America.

Indeed, although the ancient throne of superstition is overturned, its thousand fragments still lie scattered all over the country; and many an inmate of the mysterious region which no geographer has yet explored, comes still as a frequent visitor to the rustic hut. They come under different names, and

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\* A version of this poetic tale is given by Mr. Jamieson, in his *Northern Antiquities*.

in different shapes, as Hodeken, Knecht Ruprecht, Rübezahl or Number Nip; as the faithful Eckhardt, Dame Holle, etc. according to the province where they had their former home. Many things which are derided *here*, are considered as venerable *there*; and above all, much that is disbelieved in theory, exercises no small power in practice.

The fondness of the German people for poetry and song seems to have been brought along by their ancestors from their original seats on the banks of the Caspian. The Germans of Tacitus, the Franks, the Lombards, and the different branches of the Goths, all can be historically proved to have had their poets; although it nowhere appears that any of these nations had a *class*, or *caste* of bards, like the Celtic races, and in some measure the Scandinavian.\* Of the character of their songs, which for a considerable time have occupied the imaginations and ingenuity of German historians, we know nothing; but may conclude that they were chiefly warlike. No poem, which can be *proved* to be older than the Carolingian period, is extant; but there are many evidences that tradition in a poetical form, i. e. *popular ballads*, then existed. It is stated by old historians, that the praises of Alboin, king of the Lombards, resounded in the songs of the Bavarians and Saxons many ages after his death. At a diet held in 744, where St. Boniface was present, an act was passed against the singing of *satirical ballads*. In 789, it was severely forbidden to the Nuns to copy or communicate to others certain popular love-songs;† and from other historical passages it is manifest that heroic ballads were current among the people. Charlemagne first caused them to be collected. That the *barbara et antiquissima carmina, quibus veterum actus et bellum canebantur*, affirmed by his biographer Eginhard to have been the objects of the great emperor's care, were not, as has long been believed, the songs of the bards from the times of Arminius, but heroic traditions kept up by the people in ballads and songs, seems after the arguments adduced by the Schlegels and the

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\* Bragur II. p. 43. J. Grimm Ueber den altdeutschen Meistergesang, Gött. 1811. The error, founded on a misapprehension of some passages in Tacitus, Ammianus, Diodorus, and other ancient historians, that the ancient Germans had *bards*, and that these bards, like those of the Gauls, formed a distinct class, has even in modern times not yet been given up by several very able and learned writers, e. g. Docen, Görres, etc.

† Schmidt's Geschichte der Deutschen, I. p. 508.

Grimms, no longer subject to any doubt. The great ancient national Epos, the Lay of the Nibelungen itself, was perhaps never known by the common people; but the traditions on which it was founded, and the whole cyclus of heroic legends contained in the "Book of Heroes," and likewise many more, were current among them; and through whole centuries were transmitted from generation to generation only by oral means. The oldest ballad extant, at least in a fragment, is the Lay of Hildebrand, "Das Hildebrandslied," which has a decidedly popular character. Hildebrand is one of the heroes of the Nibelungen. From the ninth century several minstrel ballads (Bänkellieder) are mentioned in chronicles, e. g. "About Hatto's Treason, Kurzbold's and Benno's Exploits," etc. The celebrated hymn in honor of King Ludwig's victory over the Normans, known under the title of "Ludwigslied," must also have been familiar to the lower classes; although from the uncommon perfection of its form, one would conclude that it must have been the production of an educated poet.\*

Of the *Minne-songs* (love-songs) and the poems cotemporary with them, although chiefly emanating from the nobility and having in part emperors and other princes for their authors, no small number appear to have been equally popular among high and low. Many of them, the so-called *Tanzweisen*, or dancing songs, were expressly composed to accompany the dances on public festivities. They were of course never separated from their tunes, and were played to day in the royal hall, and to-morrow under the linden tree, where the villagers held their festive dances. In Germany, as was formerly every where the case, and still is in Spain, dancing and poetry were intimately connected. Whoever has studied the nature of the German dance or waltz, (in southern Germany called *Dreher*, *Schleifer*, *Ländler*, according to the different character of the measure,) or has even only witnessed the dances of the peasants, will easily recognise the near relationship between dancing and poetry; although all traces of the latter have disappeared from the characterless dances of the ball-room. Even at the present time, although dancing is no longer accompanied by song, the peasant lad who expects to lead the dance, sings to the musicians a whole stanza of the song from which the

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\* With the "Ludwigslied," Herder begins his collection of popular songs: "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern."



tune is named. During the period we are speaking of, poetry and song appear to have been disseminated over all Germany ; and a spirit of cheerfulness and enjoyment pervaded the whole nation. But songs which were produced by individuals of the common people, although there can be no doubt that many of this class were current, were never thought worthy of being written down. Nothing of all the poetry which has been preserved in manuscripts from this period, has survived among the people ; and hence it seems out of place to give here any specimen of the most brilliant age of early German poetry.

In the fourteenth century, when the art of poetry sunk down to the lower classes exclusively, instead of gaining a more popular character, it lost on the contrary in that, as in every other respect. From the artificial forms which the later Minnesingers had chosen to adopt in imitation of the Italians, certain laws and rules unfolded themselves, which made poetry gradually a formal and pedantic school ; nay, at length a regular mechanical business, which required the apprenticeship of a fixed number of years ; just as the trade of a shoemaker or carpenter. Poetry became lost in a labyrinth of artificial forms. Relinquished by princes and knights, and confined to mechanics and citizens, poetry *seemed* indeed to be brought nearer to the great mass of the common people. But without life and soul itself, it could produce no living effect. We mean written, and, after the invention of printing, printed poetry ; or poetry as an art. For among the common people, many good old songs were preserved and imitated ; and the *Meistersänger* or Master-singers, had always occasion to complain of the artless wandering minstrels, *fahrende Leute* or *kunstlos Gehrende* and their " rustic and uncourtly songs."\* In direct opposition to the *Meistergesang*, the *Volksgesang*, or Popular poetry, developed itself in its fullest bloom ; although the former exercised a decided influence upon the latter. Especially popular were the songs of the miners, called *Bergreihen*. Historical ballads were also very common, mostly of inferior poetical value ; but love and social amusements were then as always the principal themes. The chronicles of Limburg of the fourteenth, and some of the annals of the fifteenth century, are filled with initial verses and scraps

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\* Grimm, Ueber den altdutschen Meistergesang, p. 133.

of poetry, not seldom marked by political allusions, and stated to be heard every where in the streets, as characteristic signs of the times.

The active interest which the people, during this period, took in song and poetry is strongly proved by the above-named chronicle ; which regularly notices what songs were sung and became popular during each year. The same chronicle also bears witness how unpopular convents were in Germany, as early as the middle of the fourteenth century. A song, written in the character of a nun, was every where to be heard, which began :

“ God give him an unlucky year,  
Who me a nun has made ! ”

A leprous monk, who lived about the year 1374 on the Main, is also mentioned in this chronicle as a popular poet of distinction, whose lays were imitated by the master-singers.

Tschudi's Chronicle of Switzerland has preserved quite a number of war songs of that country, some of which are not without poetical merit. But comparatively few of these popular songs were regarded as worth preserving ; and whatever has reached posterity by tradition, has reached it in an altered form. Thus the songs of initiation into the guilds or trades' fraternities, introductory to the reception of a new member, (*Zunftlieder*, *Handwerkslieder*,) still extant among the German mechanics, are said to be partly derived from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\* Of their general character we shall speak in the sequel.

Some of the most beautiful German ballads, still sung by the common people, at least in some provinces, are also said to be derived from these early times ; and if we consider the coincidence of some of them with the popular poetry of other Teutonic nations, we are entitled to ascribe to them a still higher antiquity. Independently of them, however, not a few ballads and songs are extant, supposed to have originated in the fifteenth century ; and their value justifies us in considering this period as the golden age of German popular poetry. The following ballad, sung to a sweet and touching air, was still current towards the end of the past century, in Alsace

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\* Bouterwek's *Geschichte der Deutschen Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, IX. p. 300.

and Suabia, in different versions ; whether it is so at present, we cannot say with certainty. It is still sung in the southern valley of the Oder, and was once popular in Holland.\*

THE LAY OF THE YOUNG COUNT.

“I stood on a high mountain,  
And look’d on the Rhine so wide ;  
A little skiff came swimming,  
A little skiff came swimming,  
Wherein three Knights did ride.

And of these Knights, the youngest,  
He was the Count his heir ;  
He promised he would marry me,  
He promised he would marry me,  
Although so young he were.

He took from off his finger  
A ring of gold so red ;  
Thou fairest, finest, take it,  
My own heart’s dearest, take it,  
And wear it when I ’m dead.

What shall I do with the ringlet,  
If I dare not wear it before ?  
Say only thou hast found it,  
Say only thou has found it,  
In the grass, before the door.

Nay, why should I be lying ?  
It would not behoove me well ;  
The young Count he is my husband,  
The young Count he is my husband,  
Much rather I would tell.

Wert thou but richer, maiden,  
Hadst thou but a little gear,  
In sooth I then would take thee,  
In sooth I then would take thee ;  
For then we equals were.

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\* First printed in very different versions, taken down from the mouth of the people, in Herder and in Bragur, a highly valuable periodical. Our authority for its antiquity, is W. Grimm ; see Preface to his translation of Old Danish Ballads.

And though I have not riches,  
Yet of honor, I have some ;  
That honor I will keep it,  
That honor I will keep it,  
Until my equal come.

But if there come no equal,  
What then wilt thou begin ?  
Then I will seek a cloister,  
Then I will seek a cloister,  
To live as a nun therein.

'T was after three months' time had past,  
The Count dream'd heavily ;  
As if his own heart's dearest,  
As if his own heart's dearest,  
In a cloister he did see.

Arise, my groom, and hasten,  
Saddle mine and saddle thy steed !  
We 'll ride o'er hill and valley,  
We 'll ride o'er hill and valley ;  
The maiden is worth all speed.

And when they came to the cloister,  
They gently knock'd at the door ;  
Come out thou fairest, thou fine,  
Come out thou heart's dearest mine,  
Come forth to thy lover once more.

But wherefore should I hasten  
To thee before the door ?  
My hair is clipp'd and veiled,  
My hair is clipp'd and veiled,  
Thou 'lt have me never more.

The Count with fright is silent,  
Sits down upon a stone ;  
The bitter tears he 's weeping,  
The bitter tears he 's weeping,  
Till life and joy are gone.

With her snow-white hands the maiden,  
She digs the Count his grave ;  
From her dark-brown eyes so lovely,  
From her dark-brown eyes so lovely,  
The holy water she gave.

Thus to all young lads 't will happen,  
Who for riches covet sore ;  
Fair wives they all are wishing,  
Fair wives they all are wishing,  
But for gold and silver more."

The custom of printing and selling songs and ballads on single sheets, called "flying leaves," (*fliegende Blätter*,) was almost cotemporary with the invention of printing. Even collections of songs were made in Germany, as early as the close of the fifteenth century ; during the following century these collections increased considerably, and the songs were usually accompanied with notes.

Meanwhile, learned institutions had begun to flourish in Germany ; the Latin language reigned with uncontrolled sway, and an educated man would have been ashamed to write a verse in his mother tongue. The Reformation also, although its chief authors were governed by a spirit very different from those, who afterwards declared war against popular poetry in England and Scotland, was by no means favorable to the development of poetical talent. Luther, as well as Zwingli, were themselves warm friends of poetry, and both of them composed songs still in some measure popular among all classes. But the state of the public mind, so pregnant with the germs of a mental revolution, suffered no exercise of the faculties, but for a moral or religious object. Arousing man powerfully, and directing his attention only to one great point, *the one thing needful*, the one great interest of the soul excluded for a time all others ; and all poetry which was not of a spiritual kind was apt to assume a frivolous character. Popular ballads were the only blossoms of the age ; and in these, the sixteenth century is considered by some inquirers into literary history as eminently productive.\* On the other hand, as the people began now to read more than to sing, books of a purely popular character began to be printed for them. The Book of Heroes and the Adventures of the Horned Siegfried, were printed repeatedly during the sixteenth century ; and romantic stories in long and detailed prose were written and read by all classes.

The thirty years' war, and the times which immediately

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\* Docen's Miscellen, I. p. 248. Heinsius Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur, p. 195.

preceded that period of horror and devastation, had a destructive effect on all that was beautiful and cheerful, and crushed with brutal rudeness the blossoms of the national genius. For a considerable time, the sources of popular productiveness seemed to be entirely checked, or broke forth only in impure and tasteless overflowings. Poverty, immorality, and rudeness of manners, prevailed among the lower classes. The politics of the reigning cabinets succeeded in excluding the people entirely from all participation in public affairs. Thus their active interest in them ceased; and their love of country perished. The historical ballads of this period, are little more than rhymed relations of dry facts; no poetical spirit breathes in them. All that was sung bore the immediate stamp of the present moment; poets had lost the courage and strength to tear themselves, even for a few moments, from the harsh and cruel reality. Tilly's terrible name re-echoed in some unmelodious strains; the battle of Leipzig was the subject of several rude ballads. "The Swede,"\* who called himself a friend, was yet so much dreaded, even through Protestant Germany, that his name was used to frighten the children. A nursery-rhyme is still extant in Germany, which may stand here:

"Bet, Kindlein, bet!  
Heute kommt der Schwed,  
Morgen kommt der Oxenstjern.  
Der wird die Kindlein beten lern."

"Pray, children, pray!  
The Swede comes to-day,  
To-morrow comes Oxenstjern,  
He the children to pray will learn."

On the other hand, there never was a time in Germany, when educated poets had a more popular character than those of the first Silesian school; which was formed during the first half of the seventeenth century. They had a decided influence upon the people, especially in the cities, and may be considered in many respects as the representatives of the people. Most of them belonged to the middle classes of society; consisting of merchants, civil officers, etc. classes highly respectable, but not at that time so far separated from mechanics and common tradesmen, as at present, but further removed from the nobility. The influence of the French upon the nobility

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\* Gustavus Adolphus.

began at this time ; although it reached its summit only in the first half of the eighteenth century. Among the poets of the period we are speaking of, there is hardly a single nobleman. Many hymns composed at this time are still perfectly familiar to the German people ; and although the *names* of Flemming, Neumark, and P. Gerhard, are known only to the educated reader, it can be justly said that there is hardly an individual in Protestant Germany, who cannot sing the hymns : “ In allen meinen Thaten,” “ Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten,” and “ Befiehl Du deine Wege.” P. Gerhard’s popularity was especially great ; and it is said, that several pious persons belonging to other congregations, were wont to visit the Lutheran church, only in order to sing Gerhard’s hymns.\*

The degeneracy of the Silesian school, called its second period, or the second Silesian school, occasioned by a false imitation of the Italian and Spanish poets, — which made the productions of this school a tissue of bombastic tastelessness, pedantic affectation, and often of gross licentiousness, — could not but separate it entirely from the people ; who are only too frequently pleased with the vulgar, but never with the affected. Still more was this the case with the stiff and tame French school of the first half of the eighteenth century ; which had gradually captivated all the educated classes of Germany. During these two last periods, a complete separation took place between the higher and lower classes, in respect to taste and amusements. While for their spiritual edification and comfort, the laboring classes adhered to the older ecclesiastical poets, they found after a week’s hard labor a congenial holiday recreation in attending the popular dramatic representations, which began to flourish during this period. These genuine German dramas had their first rude beginnings in the middle of the fifteenth century, in the so called Shrove-Tuesday plays ; the more ancient *mysteries* having been mostly written in Latin, and at the utmost interspersed with German verses. The development of the German stage concerns us here only in respect to its immediate influence upon the common people. The stiff and pompous tragedies, called, “ Haupt und Staatsactionen,” intended to represent the life of the great and the powerful, but in which the Ger-

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\* Franz Horn’s *Poesie und Beredsamkeit der Deutschen*, I. p. 326.

man *Hanswurst* or Merry Andrew never was excused from appearing, and also burlesque comedies interspersed with songs, were the amusement of all classes. But even when the polite world began to confine their attendance and notice of stage-plays to translations or imitations of the French, the regular popular dramas (*Volkschauspiele*), partly of very ancient date, were kept up; and they are still extant, although with many alterations, in puppet-shows, and in the exhibitions of the itinerant players at fairs in country towns. Few of these dramas have ever been printed; they were partly extemporized, partly committed to memory from manuscripts, which gave only general directions for what was to be done and what was to be said at such and such a place. That well known personage Dr. Faust, with his infernal compact and final punishment, was one of the favorite subjects of these dramas; a popular tradition, in itself of no small interest and depth, but of the highest importance to the literary world, as having given birth to one of the most wonderful productions ever created by human genius.

As for the present state of Germany, it may be said that, while the noble ideas of general improvement and universal information have cleansed the ground of heaps of dust and rubbish, they have in their impetuous course broken down and swept away many a lovely flower and many a wholesome plant. As native dispositions and external circumstances equally exercise an influence on the development of human tendencies, it may be taken for granted, that at the present time ancient popular poetry has survived in Germany exactly in the same proportion, as the inhabitants of the different regions of that country are a *singing* people; and has decayed as they are a *reading* people. The multiplicity of books must needs be destructive to the faculty of the memory. No one, who has a well before his door, will take the trouble to go to the mountains in order to quench his thirst out of the living spring. *Tones* impress themselves more *sensibly* and therefore more strongly than *ideas*; and hence, where a song was preserved by tradition, the words were always more apt to be lost or altered, than the melody. Few persons, however, and these mostly professed musicians, have sufficient musical cultivation to read notes like letters. But before entering more into detail, we will try to give in a few words the general characteristics of German popular poetry.



In attempting to do this, we meet with the same difficulties which we should have to encounter in characterizing the national spirit itself. Without so striking peculiarities as the English, or French, or Spanish national character, its chief feature consists in its universality. Simplicity, and the strength which lies in an abrupt and elliptical style, are the characteristic features of all popular poetry ; but when we regard the treasure of songs and ballads which were *once* popular in Germany, (we do not speak of the remnants which are so now,) we are struck by a *variety* in forms, and subjects, and genius, unequalled by the popular poetry of any other nation. German popular poetry has not the tragic grandeur of the Scandinavian ; nor, with a few exceptions, the inexpressibly sweet melancholy and bold romance of the Scotch ; not the plastic and epic perfection of the Servian, nor the lyric dignity of the Spanish popular poetry. But the German singers have, in common with the English, the joyful and deep sense of nature and its divine beauties ; with the Scotch, a cordial and profound feeling ; with the Scandinavian, the condensed and chiefly dramatic representation, which despises all puerile execution. Their expressions of love are more heartfelt and hardly less glowing than those of the Spaniards ; and this passion itself is far deeper, although in general more sensual and less delicate, than among the Slavic nations ; while in playful imagination, which, without any special object, draws fanciful pictures, and delights in its own creations, they surpass not only these, but all the other nations in the world.

The Germans possess a great treasure of ancient historical ballads, of which, however, from reasons stated above, few still live among the people. The number of these ballads is so large, that a recent collector, who declares in his preface that he has taken little pains to search for them, but has only brought together " what accident and a favorable destiny put into his hands," was able, with this small trouble, to bring together one hundred and forty-three pieces.\* They might probably easily be doubled. But the *poetical* merit of these interesting songs, is comparatively small. The Germans do not possess a single historical piece of the beauty of the celebrated Chevy-chace ; very few, if any, which approach in value to the Romances of the Cid, or those of the civil wars of Granada ;

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\* I. B. Wolf, *Historische Volkslieder der Deutschen*, Stuttg. 1830.

and none which can be compared to the classical epics of the Servians, ancient and modern ; which latter find indeed their equals only in Homer's immortal rhapsodies. The German historical ballads are distinguished by fidelity, and absence of that party spirit, which has been so often the inspiring muse of the English poet. Their principal defects are, perhaps, the immediate result of their principal merit. In respect to the whole of these ballads, the editor of the above-mentioned collection, justly observes : " There shines forth from them a mind simple and upright, which quietly, but not without heart-felt interest, relates what it has seen and experienced ; honestly bringing to light and praising what appears to it the *right*, and repelling in good-natured anger the *wrong* ; frequently also chastising it with a certain coarse wit, not far fetched indeed, but always striking. There prevailed, at the time when most of these ditties were produced, a poetry among the German people, which might be called the poetry of honesty. Not encouraged by the scholars of the age, just because they were mere scholars, it was generated along with the actions it celebrated, and received its nourishment from them." How important these ballads, which have been mostly preserved in chronicles, are, for both the political and moral historian of the German nation, the reader may judge for himself ; but in a poetical respect also, they are far from being without interest. The ballad, for instance, called " The Duchess of Orlamünde," which as a whole is very valuable, has some stanzas of the very highest beauty. This princess, as a widow, fell in love with the Count of Nürnberg, and referred his expression, that there were " four eyes, which prevented him from marrying her," to the eyes of her two children by her former husband. She bribes " the wild Hager " to murder the poor innocent creatures ; and, lest the wounds should betray the deed, she herself takes the pins from her " widow's-veil," and bids him thrust them into their tender brains, when they are at play. The murderer finds the children in the hall playing ; and it is not without interest, that the rhymes, introduced in their game, are still sung by the children in Lower Lusatia. The description of the murder is touching in the highest degree, and is not surpassed by Shakspeare's celebrated scene between Hubert and Prince Arthur. The boy offers the murderer his dukedom for his life ; the little girl, in her affecting childish way, offers him all her dolls, and at last the " bird " she

has just got. That bird persecutes the murderer. He confesses himself guilty, and then dashes out his own brains.

“ God, O God ! where shall I stay ?  
 I hear the bird that calls me aye !  
 God, O God ! where shall I flee ?  
 I see the bird right over me !

\* \* \* \* \*

Both the children undecay'd  
 In their marble coffin lie,  
 As if murder'd yesterday ;  
 All the wicked to defy.”

The historical ballads of the Germans possess, for the most part, more of a provincial than of a national character. But this is far less the case with those narrative ballads, which, although perhaps occasioned by some real event, belong chiefly to the wide province of fiction. Many of them are disseminated over all Germany, often in dialects little resembling each other, and with many variations ; but though ever so ancient, they are always sung to the same tune.

The following ballad, whose proper home we cannot exactly tell, is known all over Germany ; and it may at the same time serve as an illustration of our observations concerning the ancient connexion of the traditions of the Teutonic nations. Ulrich's cruel act appeared entirely unaccountable to the German hearer or reader, until Mr. Jamieson, in his interesting *Northern Antiquities*, furnished the key. “ As a *ballad*,” this writer states, “ at least in anything like a perfect state, I have never met with it in Scotland ; but as a tale, intermixed with scraps of verse, it was quite familiar to me when a boy ; and I have since found it in much the same state, in the Highlands, in Lochaber and Ardnamurchan. According to our tradition, Ulrich had seduced the younger sister of his wife, (as indeed may be gathered from the German ballad,) and committed the murder to prevent discovery. We do not remember that any names were specified, either in the Scottish or Gaelic manner of telling the story ; in every other particular, the British tradition differed nothing from the German.” We subjoin the ballad in Mr. Jamieson's translation.

## ULRICH AND ANNA.

“ It ’s out rode Ulrich to take the air,  
And he to dear Annie’s bower can fare :  
Dear Annie, wi’ me to the greenwood gang,  
And I ’ll lear you the sma’ bird’s sang.

The tane wi’ the tither they out are gane,  
The copse o’ hazel they ’ve reekit alane ;  
And bit and bit they gaed farther on,  
Till they a green meadow cam upon.

On the green grass syne down sat he :  
Dear Annie, come set you down by me !  
His head on her lap he saftly laid,  
And hot gush’d the tears she o’er him shed.

O Annie, dear Annie, why greet ye sae ?  
What cause to greet can Annie hae ?  
Greet ye belike for your father’s gude,  
Or is ’t that ye greet for your young blude ?

Or am I nae fair eneugh for thee ? —  
It ’s gudes or gear they reckna me ;  
Fu’ little thro’ my young blude I dree,  
And Ulrich is fair eneugh for me !

Upon that fir sae fair and lang,  
Eleven young ladies I saw hang. —  
O Annie, dear Annie, that did ye see ?  
How soon sall ye the twelfthen be !

And sall I then the twelfthen be ?  
To cry three cries, then grant to me !  
The firsthen cry, she then cried there,  
She cried upon her father dear.

The nexten cry that she did cry,  
She cried to her dear Lord on high ;  
And the thirden cry, she cried sae shrill,  
Her youngest brither, she cried until.

Her brither sat at the cule red wine ;  
The cry it cam thro’ his window hyne.  
O hear ye, hear ye, my brethren a’,  
How my sister cried there out i’ the shaw !

O Ulrich, Ulrich, gude brither mine,  
 Whare hast thou the youngest sister mine ?  
 Up there upon that linden green,  
 The dark brown silk ye may see her spin.

Whereto are thy shoon wi' blude sae red ?

\* \* \* \* \*

Well may the red blude be on my shoe,  
 For I hae shot a young turtle dow.

The turtle dow that ye shot there,  
 That turtle dow did my mither bear.

\* \* \* \* \*

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It's deep in the grave, dear Annie was laid ;  
 Fause Ulrich was high on the wheel display'd ;  
 O'er Annie, the cherubim sweetly sung ;  
 O'er Ulrich croak'd the raven young."

The Germans cannot be said to be so rich in narrative ballads, as the British nations ; although they possess some, which may be compared with the most beautiful Scotch ballads, and which in general surpass the English in conciseness and energy. With a few pencil strokes, they paint a whole picture ; often, indeed, only a sketch, but a sketch of such decided character, that the hearer's imagination will easily supply the rest. Most of them are short ; some, like the Scandinavian, excluding all narration, are entirely dramatic. The following, where only one verse is narrative, but which seems to us to present before the hearer's eye a whole tragedy, may serve as an illustration of our remarks. If we may conclude from the abbreviation *Nanerl*, *Nanny*, from *Anna*, it originated in Austria or Bavaria ; where also *Joseph* is a favorite name. Schiller, however, with whom this beautiful piece gave occasion for a bombastic paraphrase, a production of his still undeveloped genius, must have heard it in Suabia, where also the first publisher found it on the lips of the people.\*

#### THE INFANTICIDE.

"Joseph, dear Joseph, O what hast thou done,  
 Thou hast made fair Nanny a most wretched one !

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\* First printed in Reichardt's *Musicalische Zeitung*.

Joseph, dear Joseph, it soon will be past ;  
Through the gate of shame they carry me fast.

Through the gate of shame, to the place so green ;  
What love has done, will there be seen !

Headsmen, dear Headsmen, O do not be slow ;  
I gladly will die, to my child I would go !

Joseph, dear Joseph, O reach me thy hand,  
God knows I forgive thee, before whom I stand.

A herald comes riding, they see the flag wave ;  
Stop ! a pardon I bring, fair Nanny to save !

Herald, dear Herald, her life-blood has flowed ;  
Good night, my fair Nanny, thy soul is with God !"

Who can be insensible to the touching beauty of this ballad, however rude and imperfect may be its versification, and however much it must lose in any version ? Indeed, if every kind of poetry must needs lose half its beauties in a translation, the truth of the Latin saying, *Dulcius ex ipsa fonte bibuntur aquae*, will never be more readily acknowledged, than in respect to the idiomatic peculiarities of popular ballads. This holds goods in a still higher degree of merely lyric productions. They are grown into the very bone and marrow of the language itself ; and a congenial spirit can at the utmost imitate, but never satisfactorily translate them. And yet they are the most essential features in the physiognomy of a people ; or as Görres expresses it, they are like pulse and breath, the signs and the measure of the internal life. " While the great *epic* streams," as this ingenious writer justly says, " reflect the character of a whole wide-spread river-district, in time and history, these lyric effusions are the sources and fountains, which, with their net-work of rills, water and drain the whole country ; and bringing to light the secrets of its inmost bowels, pour out into lays its warmest heart's blood."\* To the German popular songs, the Scotch alone can be compared in the expression of feeling and sweetness of melody. The great composers of that nation have often improved on the latter, without intimating it ; and as the whole people may be called more or less musical, and not a few of the most distinguished musicians have been born in the huts of the poor ; the com-

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\* Volks und Meisterlieder.

positions of skilful artists have mingled so completely with those of the singers of nature, and are so amalgamated with the harmonious recollections of their youth, that it would be impossible at present to decide what emanated from the people, and what was only received and often re-produced by them. The rustic sweetness of the numerous *Ranz de Vache*, both Swiss and Tyrolese, the mysterious pensiveness of the German hunting songs, and the playfulness of their dancing melodies, have long been acknowledged by the cultivated world ; and many a piece which bears on its front the name of some celebrated composer, is in reality set in a well known popular tune, and only harmonized or arranged by the artist.

According to an ancient German custom, a mechanic, after having finished his apprenticeship, before he is permitted to settle himself down as master, must travel, or, as it is called, *wander*, for two or three years, in order to become acquainted with foreign habits and skill. While the peasantry are the chief *preservers* of ancient songs and traditions, these wandering journeymen may be considered as the chief means of disseminating them all over the country. They carry with them books, printed expressly for them, consisting of songs and lays, which offer, as indeed does their whole life, a strange mixture of the deepest poetry and disgusting vulgarity. These books, however, are to be consulted as sources of popular poetry with discrimination ; for their contents, like the single sheets which the peasants take home with them from market for their evening amusement, and which are printed throughout all Europe for the lower classes, and sold to them for the smallest coin current in their respective countries, — like them, these books are mixed up indiscriminately with modern and ancient, artificial and natural poetry. Everything is offered that can be expected to please.

There are to be found in the nurseries of all the countries where the German tongue is spoken, certain scattered fragments of ancient poetry, lullabies, rhymes interwoven in children's games, or detached sayings, often hardly intelligible as they there exist ; but, as we remarked before, forming with those of other countries mutual supplements to each other, and thus becoming intelligible. There are other ancient rhymes, with which certain actions or performances are accompanied or introduced ; e. g. the building of a house, so far as the carpenter is concerned, or when the mason begins and finishes his work ; or

on driving the piles of a bridge, etc.\* There are also many fragmentary ancient local songs, chaunted on certain festivals, at the opening of spring, at the harvest-home, etc. The trades' songs (*Zunflieder*) mentioned above, belong likewise here. They are current under the title of "Songs to the glory, honor, and praise" of the respective trades. The weavers, millers, tailors, carpenters, and others, sing in them the praise of their own trades; and very often rail at other occupations, with wit not very refined, but a good deal of humor. The tailors especially are constant butts. One specimen of this kind may not be without amusement to the reader.

THE SNAIL AND THE TAILORS.

"Once on a time three tailors there were,  
    O dear, O dear, O dear !  
Once on a time three tailors there were,  
And a snail in their fright they mistook for a bear ;  
    O dear, O dear, O dear !

And of him they had such a terrible sense,  
They hid themselves close behind a fence.

Do you go first, the first one he said ;  
The next one he spake, I 'm too much afraid.

The third he fain would speak also,  
And said, He 'll eat us all up, I know.

And when now together they all came out,  
They seized their weapons all about.

And as now they march'd to the strife so sad,  
They all began to feel rather bad.

But when on the foe they rush'd outright,  
Then each one grew choke-full of fight.

Come out here ! come out ! you devil's brute,  
If you want to have a good stitch in your suit.

The snail he stuck out his ears from within ;  
The tailors they trembled — 'T is a dreadful thing !

And as the snail his shell did move,  
The tailors threw down their weapons forsooth.

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\* Bragur, Vol. III.



And when the snail crept out of his shell,  
The tailors they all ran away pell-mell."

In the songs here specified, we cannot expect to meet with real poetry ; they prove only the natural delight which persons of all ages and conditions find in rhythm and rhyme, and are remarkable only as illustrations of the moral history of a nation.

We observed above that the ancient ballads were orally preserved in Germany, in the same proportion as the people are musical ; and have been forgotten, as they are a reading race. Of the lower classes of North-western Germany, neither the one nor the other can be said. It is a race, vigorous in body and mind, full of good sense and natural judgment ; but of a decidedly phlegmatic temperament, not easily moved, and clinging to their ancient habits and prejudices with unconquerable obstinacy. To body forth in reality the colossal exploits of the ancient Teutonic heroes, it is almost sufficient to see the giant-like, blooming young men of Westphalia and Holstein. The inhabitants of North-eastern Germany are nearly related to them in character and language ; for although the peasantry of Mecklenburg are of Slavic descent, and the race of the Pomeranians strongly mixed with Slavic blood, yet the German language reigned in this part of the country almost exclusively as early as the fourteenth century ; and still earlier in the adjacent marshes of Brandenburg, where all the Slavi were cruelly extirpated. In the whole North of Germany, as far north as the Odenwald, the Harz mountains, and the frontiers of Lusatia, the Low-German, i. e. *Niederdeutsch* or *Plattdeutsch*, is spoken by the lower classes.

The German language, from the earliest times, has been divided into two great dialects, the Upper German or Frankish, and the Low German or Saxon dialect ; which latter furnished the groundwork of the present English idiom. Up to the thirteenth century, German writers were accustomed to mingle these two dialects ; and until the sixteenth century, both dialects, although gradually diverging, enjoyed an equal authority. In Thuringia and Mansfield, the latter the native province of Luther, and both of them border provinces between Lower and Upper Germany, the popular language consisted of an aggregation of both these idioms. Through that great man's translation of the Bible and other writings, the dialect of his

province, purified and enriched by his genius, became under the name of High German, the established language of books. It soon supplanted the Low German among the higher classes, at least in the cities. The last rescripts of the Mecklenburg government in the Low German dialect, are dated in 1542 and 1562. From that time the High German was adopted; and the third quarter of the sixteenth century may be considered as the period of its complete triumph; although the Bible continued to be translated into Low German through the seventeenth century, and was printed for the last time in that dialect in the year 1693.\*

In spite of this degradation, which may indeed be considered only as the result of accidental circumstances, not only the lower classes of the North remained strongly attached to this dialect; but its peculiar softness, copiousness, and *naïveté*, served also to endear it to all those cultivated persons to whom it was familiar; and it is still considered as an inexhaustible source, from which the High German language can augment its treasures. Several distinguished writers have taken pains to elevate the different dialects of the Low German idiom, by writing poetry in them; mostly in the style of the people, and with the obvious aim to render their verses popular. But we doubt whether these endeavors have ever succeeded. To most of the Low German peasantry, the High German language is familiar enough to enable them to read in it. They are not a singing race; and we doubt whether one of their ancient ballads is still sung by them, although most of their dialects are rich in historical songs. Indeed, among the peasantry of Dithmarsh, the native province of the Niebuhrs, were composed almost the best historical ballads which the Germans possess, in celebration of their war of independence.† Deficient in the musical vivacity peculiar to the Southern Germans, the poetical taste, especially of the women, is more displayed in tales and stories, the recitation of which during their long winter evenings is accompanied by the music of spinning-wheels; since their native phlegm does not prevent habitual industry. No small portion of the nursery tales and traditionary stories collected by the two Grimms, originated in the Low German

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\* Kinderling's *Geschichte der Niedersächsischen Sprache*.

† O. L. B. Wolf's "*Historische Volkslieder der Deutschen*." Several Westphalian songs, collected by Justus Möser, are printed in Nicolai's "*Feiner Almanach*," 1777.

dialect. Ingenious invention, a most simple style, and a certain dry, abrupt wit, are their chief characteristics. The far famed *Eulenspiegel*, introduced as Howlinglass in the early English drama, may be considered as the true representative of the Low German peasant wit; and his dry and ludicrous repartees and numerous waggish tricks seldom fail to call forth a smile even from the wise and cultivated.

There are also in this part of the country, especially in some parts of Westphalia, several local traditions still current; and many superstitious old sayings are yet kept up. But it would be erroneous to suppose, that all these things were founded in real superstition. "Our ancestors," as an excellent German writer says, "were in the habit of tying little blocks of wood to their keys, in order not to lose them so easily; or, if lost, in order to find them the sooner. Just so they managed with the useful sayings which they wished to inculcate on the youth; they annexed to each maxim a little block, that it might be remembered more easily. Thus they said: 'Children! as many grains of salt as you scatter, so many days you will have to wait before the gate of heaven;' or, 'Do not lay your knives upon their backs, lest the holy angels who fly about, cut their feet on them!' or, 'Girls, do not look in the glass at evening; the evil one looks over your shoulder!' And experience confirms the remark, that these little blocks assist memory just as much as rhymes, which were employed for the same purpose before the art of writing was common, or as the boxes on the ears, which our ancestors were accustomed to give the boys when they set up landmarks."\* But we feel that this path is leading us astray from our object; which is not proverbs, the collected *wisdom* of the nations, but popular poetry, which might be called with the same right their collected *feeling*.

Central Germany, i. e. Saxony, the electorate of Hesse, and Franconia, presents in many respects a very different aspect. The people are decidedly musical; they sing a great deal; but they sing Opera-airs, disseminated even among the peasantry by students travelling during their vacations, and by the wandering journeymen,—and popular songs alternately. Books are frequent; but a Saxon peasant-woman goes seldom to market without bringing home a broad sheet of poetry. The maid-

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\* Justus Möser's Werke, Berlin, 1798, Vol. I. p. 331.

servants in the cities sing many old ballads to the children ; but whatever is preserved, is preserved only accidentally. There is no real love for the relics of former days ; and the romances of Schiller and Bürger are mingled pell-mell with disfigured ballads from the fifteenth century. The following beautiful song, the tune of which is of a heart-melting sweetness and melancholy, seems however to have been made by a Saxon maid, the lorn love of a wandering journeyman.

THE WANDERING LOVER.

“ My love he is journeying far away,  
But I cannot tell why I 'm so sad all the day ;  
Perhaps he is dead, and gone to his rest,  
And that is the reason my heart 's so oppress.

When I with my love to the church did repair,  
False tongues at the door awaited us there ;  
The one it said this, and the other said that,  
And this is the reason my eyes are so wet.

The thistles and thorns, they hurt very sore,  
But false, false tongues, they hurt far more ;  
And no fire on earth ever burns so hot,  
As the secret love of which none doth wot.

My heart's dearest treasure, there 's one thing I crave,  
That thou wilt stand by, when I 'm laid in the grave ;  
When in the cold grave my body they lay,  
Because I have loved thee so truly for aye !”

In the West and South of Germany, both the country and the people present a more poetical aspect. But before we lead the reader to the flourishing regions of Austria and Suabia, and the hilly vineyards of the Rhine, let him cast a look on the Eastern frontier, Silesia and her majestic mountains. The Silesian peasantry do not sing much ; but the Giant Mountains harbor a whole host of fairy tales ; the principal actor in which is the mischievous and fanciful goblin *Rübezahl*, whose name has been happily translated into English by *Number Nip*. There is however one corner in the South-eastern part of Silesia, the valley of the Oder, between Silesia, Moravia and Hungary, called the *Kuhländchen*, which may be considered in respect to our subject as one of the most remarkable spots

of all the world. The German language spoken here, is exceedingly impure and corrupt; but although surrounded by a Slavic population, we discover in it traces of only a slight Slavic influence. In this valley, comprising not more than about sixteen square miles, containing two cities and twenty-three villages, with not much more than thirty thousand souls, a friend of popular poetry succeeded in collecting nearly one hundred and fifty songs and ballads; all of them banished, alas! from the dwellings of the educated and the genteel, and permitted to be heard only in the dust of spinning halls, amidst the noise of inns, or accompanied by the bells of the flocks.\* They are mostly sung by the women "with more voice than feeling," the collector observes, in old fashioned dancing tunes; often they hardly themselves understand what they are singing. There are, moreover, even in this small territory, whole villages, where these songs are already unknown; and to write them down seemed indeed to snatch them from oblivion. These songs did not all originate among this people; whom the above-mentioned collector describes, as "friends of song, dancing and drinking; curious, talkative, sensual in their love; manifesting, however, in their choice of a mistress, a partiality for their country, and adhering to it with a certain degree of fidelity." We meet here with many songs which were once sung in different dialects, in other provinces of Germany. The ballad called the "Lay of the young Count," (p. 306,) is also sung here, and indeed in a much finer version than the more common ones; although perhaps in the most uncouth and corrupt jargon of all Germany. The ancient ballads, the "Castle in Austria," and the "King's Daughter," resound here still in living accents; both however with many variations. We give here the first of these, in its more ancient form, omitting the additions of modern times. The ballad which follows it, will, in its simplicity, remind the reader of Sweet William's Ghost, and serve to confirm our remarks in respect to the coincidence of popular ballads among different nations.

#### THE CASTLE IN AUSTRIA.

"There lies a castle in Austria,  
Right goodly to behold,  
Wall'd up with marble stones so fair,  
With silver and with red gold.

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\* Meinert's "*Kuhländchen*," or *Fylgie*.

Therein lies captive a young boy,  
For life and death he lies bound ;  
Full forty fathoms under the earth,  
'Midst vipers and snakes around.

His father came from Rosenberg,  
Before the tower he went :  
My son, my dearest son, how hard  
Is thy imprisonment !

O father, dearest father mine,  
So hardly I am bound ;  
Full forty fathoms under the earth,  
'Midst vipers and snakes around.

His father went before the lord :  
Let loose thy captive to me !  
I have at home three casks of gold,  
And these for the boy I 'll gi'e.

Three casks of gold, they help you not,  
That boy, and he must die !  
He wears round his neck a golden chain ;  
Therein doth his ruin lie.

And if he thus wear a golden chain,  
He hath not stolen it ; nay !  
A maiden good gave it to him ;  
For true love, did she say.

They led the boy forth from the tower,  
And the sacrament took he :  
Help thou, rich Christ, from heaven high,  
It's come to an end with me.

They led him to the scaffold place,  
Up the ladder he must go ;  
O headsman, dearest headsman, do  
But a short respite allow.

A short respite I must not grant ;  
Thou would'st escape and fly ;  
Reach me a silken handkerchief  
Around his eyes to tie.

O do not, do not bind mine eyes !  
I must look on the world so fine ;  
I see it to-day, then never more,  
With these weeping eyes of mine.

His father near the scaffold stood,  
 And his heart, it almost rends ;  
 O son, O thou my dearest son,  
 Thy death I will avenge.

O father, dearest father mine,  
 My death thou shalt not avenge,  
 'T would bring to my soul but heavy pains ;  
 Let me die in innocence.

It is not for this life of mine,  
 Nor for my body proud ;  
 'T is but for my dear mother's sake,  
 At home she weeps aloud.

Not yet three days had pass'd away,  
 When an angel from heaven came down :  
 Take ye the boy from the scaffold away !  
 Else the city shall sink under ground.

And not six months had pass'd away,  
 Ere his death was avenged amain ;  
 And upwards of three hundred men  
 For the boy's life were slain.

Who is it that hath made this lay,  
 Hath sung it, and so on ?  
 That, in Vienna in Austria,  
 Three maidens fair have done."

#### THE DEAD BRIDEGROOM.

" There went a boy so stilly,  
 To the window small went he ;  
 Art thou within, my fair sweet-heart ?  
 Rise up, and open to me.

We well may speak together,  
 But I may not open to thee ;  
 For I have plighted my faith to one,  
 And want no other but he.

The one to whom thou 'rt plighted,  
 Fair sweet-heart, I am he ;  
 Reach me thy snow-white little hand,  
 And then perhaps thou 'lt see.

But nay ! thou smellest of the earth ;  
And thou art Death, I ween !  
Why should I not smell of the earth,  
When I have lain therein ?

Wake up thy father and mother,  
Wake up thy friends so dear ;  
The chaplet green shalt thou ever wear,  
Till thou in heaven appear."

Besides these ancient ballads, which probably were common to all Germany, the inhabitants of the southern valley of the Oder sing Christmas carols and roughly versified scripture tales, which are still more or less current in all the Catholic provinces of Germany. There is, however, one species of ballads, which in Germany is peculiar to this district. These are such as we would call Slavic ballads, i. e. in which the Slavic influence is manifest ; since the Slavic influence, although described as slight in respect to the language, is not inconsiderable in respect to the spirit of their poetry. The German village-bards, surrounded by a Slavic population which finds in music and song its best recreation, are prone to imitate them ; as on the other hand, the Bohemian and Moravian rustic singers borrow from their German neighbors. We were struck at recognising in the following German ballad, a Slovakish original ; for that the Slavic and not the German ditty is the original, we conclude from the greater completeness of the story, and from the nature of the fable itself. It was probably not translated, but recast ; and that indeed in a poetical mind, notwithstanding its uncouth and gross language ; since the only really poetical feature it contains, the gradation of the wounded tree as bleeding, weeping and speaking, belongs only to the German ballad.

#### THE MOTHER'S CURSE.

" There came along three Minstrels,  
They went together so proud ;  
And they went over a meadow,  
Where an alder was in the wood.

And one spake to the other :  
That tree for my fiddle I need.  
The one he began to strike,  
The alder, it began to bleed.



Another, he began to strike,  
 The alder, it began to weep ;  
 The third, he began to strike,  
 The alder, it began to speak :

O, strike not, ye three proud minstrels,  
 I am no alder in the wood !  
 O, strike not, ye three proud minstrels,  
 I am a maiden prouu.

My mother once did curse me,  
 When I went for water to the well ;  
 May she burn to dust and sulphur,  
 And to ashes in the lowest hell !

O go, ye three proud minstrels,  
 Go to my mother's door ;  
 And play, ye three proud minstrels,  
 Of me a ditty before.

The minstrels, they began to play,  
 Of her daughter who went to the well :  
 May 'st thou burn to dust and sulphur,  
 And to ashes in the lowest hell !

Play not, ye three proud minstrels,  
 Sing not so before my door !  
 And if I had ten children,  
 Such a curse I would never give more ! " \*

\* To enable the reader to make his own comparison, we here subjoin a faithful translation of the Slovakian ballad :

" The maiden went for water,  
 To the well o'er the meadow away ;  
 She there could draw no water,  
 So thick the frost it lay.

The mother she grew angry ;  
 She had it long to bemoan ;  
 O daughter mine, O daughter,  
 I would thou wert a stone !

The maiden's water-pitcher  
 Grew marble instantly ;  
 And she herself, the maiden,  
 Became a maple tree.

There came one day two lads,  
 Two minstrels young they were ;  
 We 've travelled far, my brother,  
 Such a maple we saw no where.

Come let us cut a fiddle,  
 One fiddle for me and you ;  
 And from the same fine maple,  
 For each one, fiddlesticks two.

They cut into the maple, —  
 There splashed the blood so red ;  
 The lads fell on the ground,  
 So sore were they afraid.

Then spake from within the maiden ;  
 Wherefore afraid are you ?  
 Cut out of me one fiddle,  
 And for each one, fiddlesticks two.

Then go and play right sadly,  
 To my mother's door begone,  
 And sing : Here is thy daughter,  
 Whom thou didst curse to stone.

The happy and childlike disposition of the inhabitants of Austria, together with the blessings of a blooming and picturesque country, a productive soil, and a paternal government,—for the Austrian government is severe and tyrannical only towards its foreign provinces,—makes life to them a succession of holidays; and every moment generates a new song. Max Schottky has collected the songs and ballads current in Lower Austria, for the most part in the vicinity of the capital. Those of Upper Austria have another and more sentimental character, but, so far as we know, have never been collected. Whether as much of ancient poetry is preserved in any other part, as in the *Kuhländchen*, we are not aware; but the whole country, as it is, breathes of poetry and music.

The disposition of the Bavarians is heavier; the climate is rough, the soil less fertile; and the celebrated Bavarian beer has not the inspiring power enjoyed by the population of the neighboring wine-countries. The regions of the Rhine and the Neckar have ever been the true home of German popular poetry, and are so still. No province of Germany has contributed more to the glory of their common country, than Suabia. Here dwells a race naturally of a serious disposition; but happily influenced by a mild climate, a soil easily yielding to reasonable industry, but not rich enough to indulge indolence, and a scenery which unites the grand and the lovely. The following pretty song, which exists in different versions, may serve as a specimen of the peculiar *naïveté* of a Suabian peasant lad. The melody is sweet and pensive.

THE FAREWELL LETTER.

“Now I go to the fountain,  
But I drink not;  
There I seek my heart’s dearie,  
But find her not.

Then I send my eyes round  
Hither and thither;  
There I see my heart’s dearie,  
Stand by another.

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The lads they went, and sadly  
Their song to play began;  
The mother, when she heard them,  
Kight to the window ran:

O lads, dear lads, be silent,  
Do not my pain increase;  
For since I lost my daughter,  
My pain doth never cease!”

See her stand by another,  
 O that hurts sore !  
 God keep thee, my heart's dearie,  
 I see thee never more !

Now I buy me a pen,  
 And buy ink and paper,  
 And write to my heart's dearie  
 A farewell letter.\*

Write a farewell letter,  
 O that hurts sore !  
 God keep thee, my heart's dearie,  
 I see thee never more !

Now on the moss and hay  
 I lay me down ;  
 And there into my lap  
 Three roses are thrown.

And lo ! these three roses,  
 They are all blood-red !  
 I know not if my heart's dearie  
 Be living or dead !

Now I go to the chapel,  
 And pray for her bliss ;  
 And when I come out again,  
 She gives me a kiss ! ”

That among the peasantry of Alsace, the French portion of Germany, more ancient poetry is still current than in other provinces, can easily be accounted for. The education of the higher classes is French. German books, although of course understood by the lower ranks, are comparatively rare ; and French ones hardly intelligible, and mostly disliked by them. Thus the old ballads, transmitted down from a time when the national ties of the Alsatian people were not yet broken, seem to have been the only means of satisfying their fondness for poetry and song. The following ballad, which was first taken down by Herder, is called by this great writer, “ a little lyric picture, while Othello is a powerful fresco painting,—unchecked action in all its boldness and terror.” “ The tune,” he says, “ has the clear solemn sound of an evening hymn, chaunted in star-light.”

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\* In the original the rhyme of this verse is no better, viz. *Papier*—*Brief*.

## LAY OF THE JEALOUS LAD.

“ Three stars are in the heavens,  
Beaming with love on high ;  
God keep thee, gentle maiden,  
My horse where shall I tie ?

Thy horse take by the bridle,  
And tie to the fig tree ;  
Sit down awhile by me here,  
And make some sport for me.

I cannot now be seated,  
I may not merry be ;  
My heart is sorely troubled,  
Sweet love, it is for thee !

What draws he from his pocket ?  
A knife both sharp and long !  
He stabb'd his love to the heart with it,  
The red blood on him sprung.

And as he draws it out again,  
With blood it was all red ;  
O thou, great God in heaven,  
How bitter is my death !

What draws he from her finger ?  
A little bright gold ring ;  
He throws it in the river,  
There lies the shining thing.

Swim on, swim on, thou little ring,  
Away to the deep, deep sea ;  
For dead is now my sweet love,  
No sweet love lives for me !

And thus it never doth end well,  
With a maid that would love two ;  
And thus we both have learned now,  
What a false love can do !”

The valleys of Switzerland and Tyrol are rich in poetic echoes ; and their songs are to the ear what the clear, silvery, transparent cascades, which gush numberless from their mountains, are to the eye ; the impression of one supplants that of the preceding, and the traveller gets so accustomed to the cheering, refreshing aspect and sound, that he learns to con-

sider them as necessary ingredients of the landscape. The peculiar *naïveté* of these mountain dialects makes their songs utterly untranslatable into any other language. They lose entirely their character and charm; and if Goethe's saying, "Nature has neither core nor peel," holds good as to all popular poetry, it is especially applicable to these purely *idiomatic* lays and ditties. Of the two following specimens we give the originals, and subjoin a verbal translation, only in order to make them more intelligible to the foreign reader of German, without pretending to give their spirit. Both are sung by peasant-girls, and the tunes correspond well with the words.

## I.

"Mein Herzel is zu,  
       'S kann 's keiner aufthu';  
 Ein einziger Bu'  
       Hat den Schlüssel dazu!"

"My heart is shut to,  
       None can it undo;  
 Only one laddie true  
       Has the key thereto!"

## II.

"Uf'm Bergli hab i sässe,  
 Hab den Vögli zugeschaut;  
       Hänt gesunge,  
       Hänt gesprunge,  
 Hänt 's Nestli gebaut.  
 In ä Garte bin i g'stande,  
 Ha' de Imbli zugeschaut,  
       Hänt gesummet,  
       Hänt gebrummet,  
 Hänt 's Zelli gebaut.  
 Uf de Wiese bin i gange  
 Lug de Sommervögli an,  
       Hänt gefloge,  
       Hänt gesoge,  
 Gar zu schön hänt 's g'than.  
 Und da kummt nu der Liebste,  
 Und da zeig i em froh,  
       Wie se's mache,  
       Und mer lache,  
 Und mer mache's au' so."

“ I sat upon the mountain,  
 And saw the little birds ;  
     How they sung,  
     How they sprung,  
 How they built their little nests.

I stood in the garden,  
 And saw the little bees ;  
     How they humm’d,  
     How they drumm’d,  
 How they built their little cells.

I walked in the meadow,  
 And saw the butterflies ;  
     How they skipp’d,  
     How they sipp’d,  
 And how prettily they woo’d.

And just then comes my dearie,  
 And him I laughing show,  
     How they play,  
     And we’re gay,  
 And we do even so.”

We conclude this part of our subject with one lay more ; which, displaying as it does a good deal of imagination, seems to us happily calculated to characterize German popular poetry in its relation to that of the other Teutonic nations. From the verse, “ Flög’ ich zu dir, mein Schatz, *ins Reich*,” which we have rendered, “ I’d fly far far away to thee,” we must conclude that Northern Germany is its home ; since the common people used this expression to designate the South, with the exception of Austria.

#### LOVE’S WISHES.

“ In the world I have no pleasure,  
 Far away’s my heart’s own treasure !  
 Could I but speak to him, oh then  
 My heart were whole and well again.

Lady Nightingale, Lady Nightingale,  
 To greet my treasure never fail ;  
 Greet him kindly, right prettily,  
 And bid him ever mine to be.

Then to the goldsmith’s house I go,  
 The goldsmith looks from his windôw :

Ah goldsmith, ah, dear goldsmith mine,  
Make me a ring quite small and fine.

Not too large, not too small, let it  
A pretty little finger fit ;  
And let my name be written there,  
My heart's own dear the ring shall wear.

Had I of purest gold a key,  
My heart I would unlock to thee ;  
A picture fair would there be shown,  
My treasure, it must be thy own !

If I a little woodbird were,  
I'd sit upon the tall green tree ;  
And when I'd sung enough, from there  
I'd fly far far away to thee.

Had I two wings as has the dove,  
Then would I fly o'er hill and dell ;  
O'er all the world I'd soar away,  
To where my dearest one does dwell.

And when I was at last by thee,  
Ah! shouldst thou then not speak to me,  
Then must I turn in grief to dwell  
Away from thee — my Love, farewell !"

IV. We conclude with a few remarks on the ancient popular poetry of *Holland*. The most appropriate place perhaps, would have been, where we spoke of Northern Germany and the Low German dialect.\* Dutch poetry, as a branch of literature, is certainly independent of Germany. Dutch popular poetry, however, is only one of those numerous overflowings from the same great and deep well, which water in various ways the different regions of that whole country. It is at least as intimately connected with the poetry of the other Low German dialects, as are the Swiss ballads and songs

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\* The Dutch language is a daughter of one of the two principal dialects of the German, viz. of the Saxon or Low German. The Anglo-Saxon, the Low Saxon, the Dutch, and the Flemish, are considered as sister dialects ; all four originating immediately from the Saxon or Low German tongue. The Anglo-Saxon is still extant, although much altered, in the Frisian dialect ; and, mixed with Danish and Norman French, in the English language. The Low Saxon, familiarly called *Plattdeutsch*, is spoken by the common people throughout the whole north of Germany and Prussia, in various different dialects. The Flemish and Dutch are confined to the Low Countries.

with those of the Upper German ; and as nearly related to both these latter, as are the other dialects of the Low German.

Popular Poetry, we regret to say, no longer exists in Holland. The old ballads, perhaps still more extensively than in the North of Germany, are supplanted by opera airs and modern compositions of fashionable poets. To know what was once the recreation of their ancestors, we must consult their Chronicles, or the collections of Le Jeune and Hoffmann. And in these we meet with the same variety, and in this variety the same genius, which characterizes their brethren in Germany. Most of the romantic ballads of both these nations, are possessed by them in common ; and the same relation exists between them, as between the Swedish and Danish. Ballads which are still heard, although in solitary instances, in the southern valley of the Oder, or in the regions of the Upper Rhine and Neckar, were some fifty years ago still sung by the peasant-girls on the Schelde. We even meet with traditions, which, by their being attached to certain localities, we should have concluded to belong exclusively to those places ; e. g. the legend of the “*Tannhäuser*,” which the Dutch possess in their tale of “*Heer Danielke*en.”

There is, however, one class of ballads, of which the Dutch have a more exclusive possession ; and of which no similar species is met with among the Germans, except in a few pieces preserved in the *Kuhländchen* ; nor among other nations, except in some of the English Christmas carols. These are *Bible ballads*, relating principally to our Saviour’s birth and education, and to his resurrection. These narrative ballads were formerly sung indiscriminately along with Christmas and Easter hymns of a merely lyric character. The German scholar, who published two years since the judicious collection of Dutch popular songs, the title of which stands at the head of this article, says in respect to the older spiritual songs of Holland : “ The greatest portion of them appeared in the middle of the fifteenth century, and disappeared again before the close of the following one. Many of them found favor with the people, and might therefore justly lay claim to the title of popular songs. These, like all other religious songs, were for the most part either adapted to the airs of profane songs or imitated from them. The greater number, however, were not so widely diffused, but confined rather to the circle of private devotion. Moreover, from the nature of



their contents, they were necessarily limited to a very small circle ; since the greater part of these were songs which treated of the nature and circumstances of the soul in love with the Saviour, and of the means by which it sought to gain the affections of its bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Other classes of sacred songs were severally devoted to the celebration of the birth and resurrection of Christ, and to the praises of the blessed Virgin. Thus then, the earlier sacred poetry of Holland consisted only of four descriptions of songs, viz. Christmas Carols, Easter Hymns, Songs on the Virgin, and Songs on Christian Faith and Doctrine."

The two latter classes the Dutch possessed in common with all Christians, and especially the Roman Catholic nations of Europe. They disappeared in Holland in the same proportion as the Reformation spread. Among the German Protestants, only the hymns of the Moravians and of the School of Pietists, so called, the followers of the venerable Franke and Spener, breathe the identical spirit of these Dutch religious songs. There is the same dulcet play with the heavenly Bridegroom, which delights in adapting all the glowing colors and expressions of earthly love to the relation between the soul and Christ, and gives even to the purest feelings a dress of sensuality. Nothing could be more unlike the equally fervent, but sound and racy piety of the German spiritual singers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Flemmings and the Gerhardts! Of the two other classes, which we designated above as Bible ballads, we find among the Germans only a few traces. The so called *Fulneck Carols* are principally lyric. They are very ancient, and full of allusions hardly intelligible in our day. They resemble in some measure the Slavic songs of this description, which have mostly come down from time immemorial ; and they have, on the whole, as little meaning as these latter. To the few Scripture ballads still extant in the southern valley of the Oder, and *perhaps* in some other places, the following remarks of Hoffmann hold good, as well as to the Dutch. "The Carols or Christmas Songs," he continues, "are those which most deserve our attention. In them we may clearly discern the childlike religious spirit of the olden time, when men were not content to relate in song the history of our Saviour's birth simply as recorded in the Scriptures ; but sought by little traits drawn from national and domestic life,

to make it more attractive and instructive ; and so to apply it directly to the hearts of the pious and the faithful.”\*

These Bible ballads, in which the scenes of Scripture were thus in a highly *naïve* and popular way rendered familiar to the nation, emanated from the same spirit which induced the Dutch and Flemish painters to conceive and represent many of the same subjects in a style peculiar to themselves, at least in the extent to which they carried it. An English Reviewer observes,† that the custom of familiarizing from reverential and affectionate motives the personages and events of Scripture, was as universal among other nations as among the Dutch. This is true to a certain extent. All popular poetry bears exactly the stamp of the time which produced it. No popular reciter of a scripture tale would ever think of giving it an oriental coloring, nor of imprinting upon it the stamp of that sublimity, which cultivated Christians are accustomed to associate with the thoughts of God and Christ. There exist numerous German popular tales and legends relating to the divine government, to St. Peter and the keys of heaven, etc. St. Peter bears, in general, the character of extreme forwardness, and his presumption is corrected by the Lord Jesus Christ, or by God the Father himself. In one of these legends the Lord, travelling with his disciples, sees a broken horse-shoe lying in the path, and bids Peter pick it up. But Peter pushes it contemptuously away with his foot. The Lord then, in his mild way, picks it up himself, and coming to a blacksmith's shop, sells it for three-pence. For these three-pence he buys cherries, and, after a long and fatiguing journey, when all suffer from thirst, he drops them one after another. Peter picks up the cherries with avidity, one by one, and instead of stooping once must stoop now twenty times ; and is thus convinced that he ought not to despise the mean and the little. In another German legend, the author of which is the celebrated Master-singer Hans Sachs, the same apostle presumes to blame the divine government. Christ smiles and gives him the sceptre for one day. Just then a poor woman comes along leading a young goat to pasture. “Go,” she says, “go in the Lord's name, God will shelter thee from wolves and from thunder ; I must go home and work for my daily wages and get

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\* Hoffmann, l. c. p. 1, 2.

† Foreign Quarterly Review, July 1834, Art. VII.

bread for my babes. God will protect thee with his own hands!" "Hast thou heard the prayer of the poor woman?" the Lord asks Peter; "now thou must take this goat into thy care to day, because thou art to-day the Lord God." Peter does as he is bid. He runs after the young goat the whole day, up hill and down hill. The day is very hot and the goat seems never tired. At evening St. Peter, all covered with sweat, and sufficiently humbled, brings back the goat, fully convinced that he, who cannot even rule a goat, is not fit to govern the world; and that man does better to leave it to God. Thus all these tales are calculated to inculcate a certain religious truth;\* while the Dutch ballads above-mentioned, on the contrary, have nothing of a moral tendency. The style of the German stories is certainly equally familiar; the Lord speaks exactly in the same manner as the story-teller is wont to speak to his inferiors, and the whole representation is as familiar and material as possible; but we nowhere meet with so many trifling particulars, with such a minute execution of details in the imitation of every-day nature, as in the Dutch and German ballads above specified. They resemble exactly in this respect the pictures of the Dutch school; while in respect to simplicity and want of skill in their conception, they are like the scriptural designs of the old masters, who represented God in his night-gown and with his pipe, taking a walk in Paradise on a fine summer evening, while lions and lambs skipped joyfully around him, and Adam and Eve hid themselves behind the trees. Some of the English Christmas carols may be compared to them; e. g. the ballad of the Cherry-tree, beginning:

"Joseph was an old man,  
An old man was he, etc."

But the collection of Mr. Sandys affords few traits like the following in a Dutch ballad:

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\* In another of these amusing and characteristic German popular tales, the home of which is Westphalia, a tailor to whom St. Peter has denied entrance into Heaven, slips in when the door is left open a moment. One day, when the Lord happens to take the air with his holy angels, the tailor peeps through the hole before the throne, through which God is wont to look at the world beneath. There he sees one of his brother tailors put aside a yard of cloth. In his virtuous anger he breaks off one of the feet of the throne, and flings it down on the thievish tailor. The Lord returns from his walk, and discovering what has happened, reproves him: "Take care! take care! if I had been so rash, what would have become of thee!"

“ The mother she made for the child a bath,  
How lovely then it therein sat !  
The childling it plashed with its little hand,  
That the water out of the bason sprang.”

Or the following, relating to the manner in which the holy family labored in Egypt for their sustenance :

“ Mary, that maiden dear,  
Well could she spin ;  
Joseph was a carpenter,  
And could his bread win.

When he was grown so old  
That no longer work he could,  
The thread he wound ;  
And Jesus to rich and poor  
Carried it round.”

The following family picture is from an ancient German ballad, preserved in the Kuhländchen. Joseph calls Mary up to make the fire and take care of the breakfast. Every thing is minutely described ; how she rises, obedient to her husband, blows the coals left in the ashes over night, etc.

“ And Mary took a porringer  
So small and neat ;  
She made for her babe a gruel in it,  
And put of butter in a bit,  
And that was sweet !  
And Mary to the hostess went,  
And hung a kettle over the hearth,  
The child to bathe so warm ;  
And then she bathes her dearest child,  
It never will do him harm.  
The hostess she had a little child,  
It was both crooked and lame ;  
She bath'd it in the self-same bath,  
Wherein dear Jesus just lain hath,  
And so it strait became.”

It would be easy to adduce parallels to this nursery-scene from among the ancient scriptural ballads still current in the West of England ; but we have already trespassed beyond our limits.